IUR
International UFO Reporter

Volume 33, Number 2

House Minority Leader Gerald Ford (left front) is applauded by (left to right) Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield, Speaker of the House John William McCormack, First Lady Lady Bird Johnson, and President Lyndon Baines Johnson. Taken in 1967. Photo courtesy of the Gerald R. Ford Library.

The Swamp Gas aftermath:
Some notes from the Gerald Ford files

International UFO Reporter

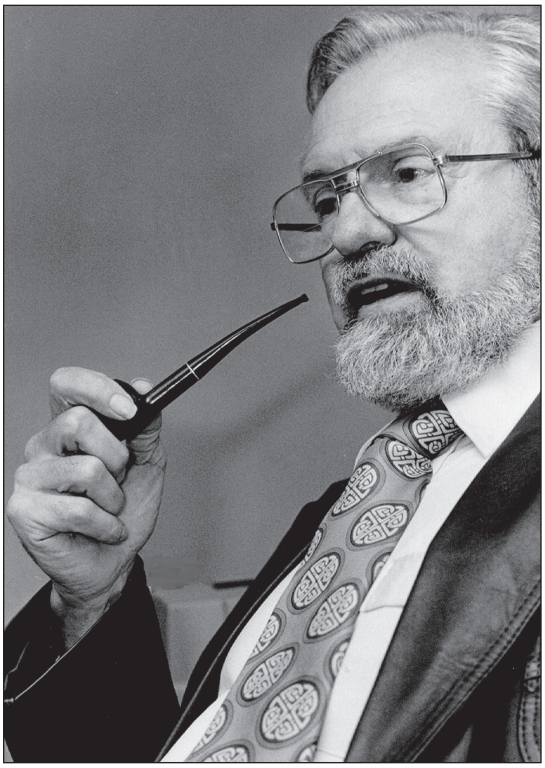
Editors:
Jerome Clark
George M. Eberhart
Mark Rodeghier

Contributing Editors:
Bill Chalker
Richard F. Haines
Kevin D. Randle
Jenny Randles
Chris Rutkowski

Web site:
www.cufos.org

E-mail:
Infocenter@cufos.org

Phone:
(773) 271-3611



J. Allen Hynek
1910-1986

NARCAP's Project Sphere *by Richard F. Haines* **3**

Two spherical UAP cases witnessed by Canadian pilots *by Don Ledger* **7**

The Swamp Gas aftermath *by Bill Murphy* **10**

Book reviews *by Jerome Clark and Robert J. Durant* **17**

Letter **23**

Another hole in the cloud *by Mark Rodeghier* **24**

Published in July 2010.

International UFO Reporter (ISSN 0720-174X) is published quarterly by the J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies, P.O. Box 31335, Chicago, Illinois 60631.

All rights reserved. Reproduction without permission is strictly prohibited. Copyright © 2010 by the J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies.

Third-class postage paid at Chicago, Illinois.

Advertisements accepted for publication in this magazine do not necessarily reflect the viewpoints of the J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies.

Address all article submissions, letters to the editor, and other editorial correspondence to *International UFO Reporter*, Center for UFO Studies, P.O. Box 31335, Chicago, Illinois 60631. Address all subscription correspondence to *International UFO Reporter*, P.O. Box 31335, Chicago, Illinois 60631.

The *International UFO Reporter* is a benefit publication mailed to Associates of the Center for a contribution of $25.00 or more. Foreign Associates add $5.00 for delivery. All amounts in U.S. funds. Other publications also available for contributors of larger amounts. For details, write to the J. Allen Hynek Center for UFO Studies, P.O. Box 31335, Chicago, Illinois 60631, USA.

Postmaster: Send Form 3579 to CUFOS, P.O. Box 31335, Chicago, Illinois 60631.

NARCAP's Project Sphere

Are spherical UAP a threat to aviation safety?

by Richard F. Haines
© April 2010

Flight safety within the National Airspace System (NAS)[1] of the United States of America remains of critical importance to everyone who is associated in any way with aviation. Other nations share similar concerns as well. Safety affects many aspects of the long-term viability of aviation, a key transportation system of all modern nations, so that anything that can be shown to potentially impact the flight safety—of any kind of airplane (private, military, test, or commercial)—should be of genuine interest to aviation officials around the world.

This report addresses one particular subject that, as far as can be determined from the open literature, has been overlooked by aviation officials at all levels, namely, generally small, energetic, propelled (i.e., not passive), spherical phenomena and/or objects that have been reported for decades within the NAS and elsewhere around the world.[2] Whether or not these strange and diverse objects pose a threat to flight safety remains to be seen. Nevertheless, the fact that so many have been reported by pilots and credible witnesses on the ground (flying very near airplanes) and that numerous air force interceptors have been seen chasing them calls for a more critical analysis. Here we will simply call them unidentified aerial phenomena, or UAP for short.

Flight safety

Aviation safety is of central concern to more and more people around the world. For as prosperity in general increases, so do the number of people who can afford to fly. Indeed, the term "safety" embodies a large and very complex concept composed of hundreds of independent and interacting parameters; it is this complexity that makes safety so difficult a subject to study. A NASA-sponsored analysis of U.S. aviation accidents has subdivided government aviation statistics into scores of categories (Turnbull and Ford, 1999). This Langley Research Center activity is known as the "Aviation Safety Analysis and Functional Evaluation" (ASAFE). These researchers found that between 1990 and 1996 private pilots (a category called "general aviation") accounted for 12,407 aviation accidents, 2,450 of which were classified as fatal accidents (20%). There were a total of 4,374 fatalities (mean of 0.4 fatalities per accident).

General aviation accounted for almost 85% of all fatal accidents and 77% of the total fatalities. On the other hand, commercial aviation (a category called "Large Air Carriers") accounted for 143 accidents, nine of which were classified as fatal; 300 people died (mean of 2.1 fatalities per accident). U.S. military aviation operations were not considered in the ASAFE.

UAP as possible causal agents in accidents

Since at the present time there are no specific categories included on the FAA, NTSB, or ASRS data recording forms by which any kind of UAP may be considered as a causal factor in aircraft accidents or incidents, no such events are found in Turnbull and Ford's otherwise excellent and comprehensive work.[3] Of course, reports involving UAP may perhaps be found there under a different heading. Four possible reasons for this lack of a reporting category for UAP within their study are suggested: (1) the incidence of such (UAP) events is so low that they don't warrant inclusion or serious statistical consideration, (2) pilots cannot or will not use the term UAP or UFO officially when relating an aerial

[1] Additional information available at www.atcmuseum.org/nas.asp.

[2] This report is limited to phenomena and objects that are known to travel below the stratosphere. Only a few subjects involving spherical objects that fly at much higher altitudes are discussed here, such as the Echo passive communication satellite balloons of the 1960s and more recent high-altitude long-endurance (HALE) unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV). See www.psl.nmsu.edu/uav/conops/ and Section 3.2 (Aerial Photos) of this NARCAP document.

[3] A review of the 229 individual elements of the original ASAFE (accident-related) taxonomy presented in Appendix A of Turnbull and Ford (1999) cited only one "unknown" category where the reason for the occurrence of the accident was "undetermined" and might possibly permit a reference to the involvement of a UAP as a causal factor.

Richard F. Haines is chief scientist for the National Aviation Reporting Center on Anomalous Phenomena. This article is the introduction to the full report, Spherical UAP and Aviation Safety: A Critical Review, April 2010, *which can be found on the NARCAP website at narcap.org/ProjectSphere.htm. Dr. Haines served as editor of the report.*

encounter that results in an incident or accident,[4] (3) pilots do not report such aerial encounters at all, and/or (4) this class of causal agents is deliberately deleted from official databases. Based on my experience, possibilities 2 and 3 are most likely to account for this effect.

Let us take a further look at current U.S. aviation accident statistics presented in Turnbull and Ford's report to see if other insights may be gained concerning UAP sightings. We will concentrate on two types of aviation operations—general aviation (private) and large air carriers (commercial)—since together they account for the largest number of accidents. Statistical analyses of aviation accidents show that skill-based errors by the flight crew "are responsible for an overwhelming number of civil aviation accidents . . . [and is] . . . the top causal factor (in every category of air operation) . . . accounting for 20–25% of the total number of causal factors."

In other words, breakdowns in pilot judgment and/or flying skills are thought to play a central role in contributing to aviation accidents. If a UAP is maneuvering erratically at high speed near an airliner and the pilot is trying to avoid it (see Section 3.1, Pilot Sighting Reports, of this NARCAP document), great skill and judgment are called for. But unless that pilot actually reports seeing the UAP, the encounter will not be logged at all and therefore will not be reflected in official aviation statistics.

Definition of safety

In investigating aviation safety, its definition must be broad enough to encompass every possible causal event,[5] otherwise investigators are likely to overlook subtle and low-probability-of-occurrence events that can have disastrous consequences. As mentioned above and as will become clear in this paper, one subset of possible causal events that has been largely left out of official reporting forms and protocols to date is the presence of UAP operating near aircraft.

This is also the case, by the way, for most nations on Earth. When pilots, airport operators, and Air Traffic Control (ATC) personnel encounter UAP in the course of their routine operations, the consequences can be not only unexpectedly stressful but can lead to unanticipated and potentially dangerous situations.

The definition of increased aviation safety that results from the above discussion and which is used in this paper is qualitative rather than quantitative:

> Increased aviation safety results from the continual conduct of ground and air operations in a manner such that no personnel are killed or injured, no aircraft or ground support vehicles or equipment are damaged, and the potential and/or actual impact of *all conceivable* causal events upon the successful operation of all aircraft are taken into account.

Of course, decreased aviation safety may be defined as the opposite of the above where people are injured or killed and aircraft (and ground equipment) are damaged and the impact of all conceivable causal events is not taken into account, *including UAP.* In the words taken from an *Aviation Week and Space Technology* article (August 14, 2000, p. 54), "Insurers prefer to leave CAT (clear air turbulence) in the 'act-of-God' category, which tends to keep liability to a minimum." Perhaps the same thing might be said of UAP!

UAP have been appearing in the skies of nearly every nation on Earth for a long time and have been reported by highly qualified witnesses, as this report will reveal. Interesting details of such incidents are presented in Sections 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 of this NARCAP document and elsewhere (Haines, 2000; Weinstein, 2010). Nevertheless, with only a few exceptions, these sightings have been ignored both by aviation officials as well as by the science community; they have been quietly and unofficially banned as being a phenomenon unworthy of scientific scrutiny.[6]

But this simple ignorance, willful neglect, or abject and even deliberate avoidance of the subject[7] has not made these ubiquitous phenomena disappear. Indeed, UAP continue to show up at apparently random times and places and at all altitudes above the surface of the Earth. It is because of this last characteristic that they become of particular interest to the staff of the National Aviation Reporting Center on Anomalous Phenomena (NARCAP). This fact forms part of the rationale for preparing this report concerning this particular class of spherical UAP.

NARCAP

The National Aviation Reporting Center on Anomalous Phenomena was established in 2001 to provide a completely confidential and convenient place where U. S. pilots and air traffic controllers could report their sightings of highly unusual aerial phenomena of all kinds without fear of ridicule or damage to their careers.[8] Unfortunately, there is evidence that both kinds of responses continue to occur, not only in the United States but also in many other "modern" nations (Roe, 2004).

NARCAP is a nonprofit, public-benefit, scientific organization that is comprised of two major divisions: administrative and scientific. Further details may be found on its website (www.narcap.org). Its all-volunteer staff works within four areas: Advisory, National Technical Specialists, International Technical Specialists, and Research Associates.

[4] Evidence for this suggestion is given elsewhere (Haines, 2000; Roe, 2004).

[5] We are not advocating the inclusion of every possible causal event, but rather those that careful research shows to be linked to incidents and accidents. Such research must not preclude any possible causal event merely because it is not presently politically correct or scientifically accepted.

[6] See Sturrock (1999) for further support of this statement.

[7] These almost irrational behaviors have contributed to a lessening of respect for science by the general public, who know that a real phenomenon exists, deserves to be studied, and is not just a modern-day myth.

[8] Pilots and air traffic control specialists who desire to make a confidential report should go to the Reports section of www.narcap.org where appropriate forms are available.

Since its founding, NARCAP has worked to assist others to set up affiliates in other nations such as Canada and France.

When UAP come in close proximity to airplanes,[9] there is reasonable evidence to support the contention that there is a greater probability for an incident or accident to occur (Haines, 2000; Weinstein, 2009). This is one reason why NARCAP documents such events and shares its findings through its website and other means. The present research report continues this trend.

Government, commercial, private, labor union, insurance company, and military aviation officials do not need to understand what UAP are before they take them seriously. One of NARCAP's main goals is to help these officials recognize their responsibility to be proactive and to work toward preventing accidents and incidents rather than waiting until it is too late. We remain ready to give our assistance.

Spherical UAP

This report presents a critical review of various kinds of objects and phenomena that are still poorly understood, along with others that are well-known but still might be misidentified, namely, UAP having a spherical shape. This subject was deliberately selected because of the relatively large number of pilot and ground-witness reports that describe them. In the case of ground witnesses, cases are included in which one or more airplanes clearly pursue the UAP or vice versa. Deliberate Air Force jet scrambles are included as well (see Section 3.3.1 of the NARCAP document).

The author has collected a large number of pilot narratives that describe one or more spherically shaped objects (or lights at night) that approach their airplane from a distance, take up station nearby (often decelerating rapidly to match exactly their own airspeed), sometimes fly across to the opposite side of the airplane or spiral around the airplane several times, and eventually fly away into the distance or suddenly disappear. Now, if such narratives are to be taken seriously —which they must be if only for the sake of acknowledging the credibility and general reliability of the pilot witnesses, if not also for the sake of aviation safety—we must take a careful look at what we know about spheres in general. But first a rather typical sighting report is presented for the sake of background.

A sample pilot narrative

The author listened to the following account from an Air Force pilot many years ago; it is fairly typical because it includes several spherical and apparently metallic objects that maintained strict formation flying with his huge Air Force aircraft over an extended period of time. In addition, there were multiple eyewitnesses to the encounter on board as well as subsequent official pressure placed upon the witnesses to "forget" the entire incident.

The author was a passenger on a NASA airplane enroute from Moffett Field, California, to Houston, Texas, in the mid-1980s to take part in a Space Station technical research briefing at the Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center. The small "corporate" passenger jet held about 20 people. In addition to the two NASA pilots in the cockpit was a third who acted as navigator. I began talking with him. He said that he was a retired Air Force B-52 commander; with some initial reluctance, he told me about his own unusual experience that took place in approximately 1962. He shared the following story with me with the understanding that I would not disclose his name. I was not able to record it at the time; his words impressed me so much, however, that they have remained clearly etched in my memory ever since.

> I was piloting a brand new B-52 right off the assembly line in Wichita, Kansas, and had a full crew on board, but we had no operational radar or guns. They were going to be installed later. We were headed for an airbase in the southwestern part of the country. The sky was completely clear and the sun was high overhead when this event happened. We were at our assigned cruise altitude that I don't remember now. I had engaged the autopilot that maintained our airspeed, altitude, and heading. Suddenly I noticed a bright flash of sunlight far over on my left side and I turned to see what it was. I was surprised to see a spherical object that looked metallic, like polished chrome. It took up a position some distance near my left wing tip and kept pace with us. It was perhaps from four to eight feet in diameter and had no seams, rivets, insignias, or other markings that I could see. As I was just about to yell for my First Officer to come over and look at the thing he said from his (right) seat something like, 'Commander, there's a round, metallic ball flying with us off our right wing.' He went on to describe to me an identically shaped and sized object that seemed fixed in position with us. We must have been flying at about 300 to 350 knots or so at the time.
>
> Well, to make a long story shorter, the crewman in the tail who would normally operate our tail guns called on the intercom and announced that there was a round shiny metal ball following very close right behind our airplane. The top gunner and the bottom gunner also both called in to say that they too saw two more objects of the same shape keeping exact pace with the airplane, one directly above and the other below us. These three objects had the same appearance as the two we had off our wingtips.
>
> Well what did I do? I didn't know what they were, so I went into a standard evasive flight maneuver. First I disconnected the autopilot and then put the plane into a dive and changed our heading to see if I could lose the objects. After about ten or fifteen minutes of doing this it was clear that we couldn't shake them. They maintained their positions (relative to the huge jet) exactly no matter what I did, so they certainly weren't reflections of sunlight or weather balloons or birds.
>
> I finally decided to climb back up to our assigned cruise altitude and heading and turned the autopilot back on again. Then, after a few more minutes the five spheres

[9] Or conversely, when a pilot approaches a UAP, the same is true.

left us, apparently in the exact opposite order in which they had arrived. This was confirmed by the other crewmen on board. The object under our belly (apparently) was the first to leave. It dropped down some distance and then accelerated upward in a steep climb. It was on our own flight heading. We both saw it pass by our nose. The object that was flying above us took off next. It simply took off in the same direction as the first in a high acceleration and we also saw it disappear into the sky in seconds. The tail gunner said that the third object slowed or backed away from the airplane a little and then it too accelerated upward on our heading into the sky. Then the copilot and I were amazed to see both wing-tip spheres accelerate at the same moment and climb out of sight parallel to each other until they were also gone. It was like they were under the same simultaneous control.

Other details of how the flight crew dealt with this alleged event and how they were treated by Air Force officials upon landing will not be discussed here, except to say that after they landed the entire flight crew was warned not to talk to anyone about the event and even to treat it as if it hadn't happened at all. Concerns were expressed that the B-52 might have been contaminated by radioactivity during the event. For instance, the pilot was commanded not to taxi the airplane near any buildings but leave it near the runway. Interestingly, there is no record of this event found in Project Blue Book files of the Air Force. If an official report was made, it must have been routed to another destination.

Even though there were no objective measurements made at the time, this incident involved at least five highly trained Air Force witnesses and probably more. The details of this incident become important (and increasingly familiar) pieces of a larger puzzle, a puzzle whose clear image probably lies at the core of all UAP.

What was the source of the energy the objects employed in order to pace the jet for so long a time? What kind of flight guidance and control mechanisms were used in order to perform these precise maneuvers relative to the jet? More particularly, how did five separate spherical objects navigate in order to assume a fixed position relative to the B-52 during its normal flight and its subsequent evasive maneuvers? What kinds of natural atmospheric phenomena might explain this sighting? Could these objects have been unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV)? Did these UAP constitute any actual threat to flight safety of this B-52?

Contents of this report

We will begin with what is not discussed in this report. We will not look back into the voluminous historical literature that documents pilot sightings of UAP of the first 60 or more years of aviation worldwide. The interested reader will find the following sources of particular interest in this regard (Clark, 2003; Good, 1988; Hall, 1964; Ruppelt, 1956; Smith, 1997). Suffice it to say that spherically shaped UAP have been reported by pilots and others since the early days of the 20th century. In order to make a stronger case for the need for genuine concern to be shown about aviation safety specifically related to these unexplained aerial phenomena, we have chosen to emphasize more recent sighting reports. Two other subjects that are not discussed in any depth here include the present negative political attitude that continues to be shown toward this subject as well as the closed-mindedness of the science community toward the reality that UAP represent. It is simply counterproductive to do so here. In spite of these omissions, the reader will find much to contemplate in subsequent sections of the NARCAP document.

Various physical characteristics of spheres are considered in Section 2, such as their aerodynamics (2.1), radar cross section (2.3), and geometry (2.5). Also presented are two papers presenting hypothesized electrical and plasma properties of various atmospheric phenomena (2.2), including a proposed research methodology that could further our understanding of them (2.4). Section 3 presents selected evidence for the existence of spherical UAP. Section 3.1 presents an interesting array of sighting reports of spherical objects and luminous phenomena reported by pilots in Brazil, Canada, France, Japan, Mexico, and the United States. Indeed, we know that reports could have been elicited from scores of other nations given the time and effort to do so. Because there are many reports made by eyewitnesses on the ground of spherically shaped objects seen in close proximity to airplanes, a number of them are summarized in Section 3.3.1, along with selected airborne photographic evidence in 3.2.

But what could these objects and/or phenomena be? This fundamental question is addressed in Section 4 where we discuss weather and other kinds of balloons (4.1), unmanned aerial vehicles[10] and other generally spherically shaped lighter-than-air objects (4.2), and ball lightning and earthlights (4.3). The complexity of this general subject is so great that a number of additional miscellaneous subjects are also addressed, for example, examples of other lighter-than air spheres (3.3.2), unexplained spheres discovered on Google Earth imagery (5.1), and a preliminary taxonomy of UAP shape names (5.2). The report concludes with several conclusions and recommendations that should be taken seriously by aviation officials at the highest levels of government and industry in the name of improved flight safety.

Another dimension

Perhaps hidden from sight here, but surely not on purpose, is the fact that spheres have a beauty and simplicity all their own. These two features in particular can be easily overlooked when we steer a course guided only by principles of scientific

[10] According to an FAA Aerospace Forecast for the period 2009 to 2025, unmanned commercial aircraft systems will evolve significantly in terms of their autonomy (that is, on-board control capabilities) and independence from Earth-based control. More than 100 companies, academic institutions, and government organizations are developing more than 300 unmanned aerospace systems at the present time.

and technological navigation. If we concentrate only on the question of how such objects fly but overlook the simplicity of their shape, we have missed a part of the truth. If we study only details of their radar cross section without at the same time contemplating their intrinsic elegant beauty we may have missed another potentially important aspect of their nature.[11] So the reader is urged to keep an open mind to every possible aspect of this subject from scientific to aesthetic, pragmatic to theoretical, simple to complex.

References

Beyer, William H. *CRC Standard Mathematical Tables,* 25th ed. (Boca Raton, Fla.: CRC Press, 1981), pp. 128, 259, 262, 355.

Clark, Jerome. *Strange Skies: Pilot Encounters with UFOs* (New York: Citadel Press, 2003).

Good, Timothy. *Above Top Secret: The Worldwide UFO Cover-Up* (New York: Quill, 1988).

Haines, Richard F. *Aviation Safety in America: A Previously Neglected Factor* (National Aviation Reporting Center on Anomalous Phenomena, TR-1, 2000), www.narcap.org/reports/001/narcap.TR1.AvSafety.pdf.

Hall, Richard H. *The UFO Evidence* (Washington, D.C.: National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena, 1964).

Roe, Ted. *Aviation Safety in America: Under-reporting Bias of Unidentified Aerial Phenomena and Recommended Solutions* (National Aviation Reporting Center on Anomalous Phenomena, TR-8, July 2004), www.narcap.org/reports/008/TR8Bias1.htm.

Ruppelt, Edward J. *The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects* (New York: Doubleday, 1956).

Smith, Willy. *On Pilots and UFOs* (Longwood, Fla.: UNICAT Project, 1997).

Sturrock, Peter A. *The UFO Enigma: A New Review of the Physical Evidence* (New York: Warner Books, 1999).

Turnbull, Andrew, and Carl Ford. *Aviation Accident Analysis* (Federal Data Corporation/NYMA, Aerospace Sector, prepared for Systems Analysis Branch, NASA Langley Research Center, Hampton, Virginia, May 31, 1999).

Van Nostrand's Scientific Encyclopedia, 3rd ed. (New York: Van Nostrand, 1958), p. 1550.

Weinstein, Dominique F. *A Preliminary Study of 300 Cases of Unidentified Aerial Phenomena (UAP) Reported by Military and Civilian Pilots* (National Aviation Reporting Center on Anomalous Phenomena, ITS-1, February 2010), www.narcap.org/documents/aircat_DWeinstein_300cases_9-09.pdf. ✦

[11] While "simplicity" and "beauty" may lie outside the traditional boundaries of the "hard" sciences they are, nonetheless, aspects of reality. They are as important to consider as anything else because no one yet knows the actual core identity of UAP.

Two spherical UAP cases witnessed by pilots in Canadian airspace

by Don Ledger

© November 2009

Case 1. May 13, 1958. Brilliant, huge "ball lightning" threatens DC-3. North American Sector: Western Canada. The flight from Cold Lake, Alberta, to Victoria, British Columbia, on May 10 was necessary, but for the pilot of the Dakota DC-3 (Fig. 1) it was somewhat depressing. Royal Canadian Air Force pilot Flight Lieutenant Bob H. was carrying the body of a friend and a fellow flight lieutenant, pilot instructor Jack Findley.

Findley had been killed three days before on May 7 during flight training. Findley and the pilot, Officer Maybe, were attached to 4 Wing and were taking off from what was then RCAF Station Cold Lake in Alberta in Canada's all-weather interceptor at the time, the Avro CF-100.

Fig. 1. Dakota DC-3 operated by the Canadian Armed Forces.

While climbing away from the runway, without warning, the controls ceased up. With too much runway behind them and at low altitude, F/L Findley immediately ordered F/L Maybe to eject and waited the three seconds for him to do

Don Ledger is an international technical specialist for NARCAP in Canada. This article appeared in Section 3 of the NARCAP report, Spherical UAP and Aviation Safety: A Critical Review, April 2010, *which can be found on the NARCAP website at narcap.org/ProjectSphere.htm.*

so while the aircraft rolled to the right. Maybe's seat ejected horizontally. A fraction of a second later the instructor did the same, but the roll had continued during that fraction of a second, rocketing F/L Findley into the ground, killing him. Ironically this was not meant to be Findley's flight and he had taken it when the assigned instructor had canceled out due to his wife having an operation.

F/L Bob H. had a couple thousand hours on the Dakota, the RCAF designation for the Douglas DC-3, so he volunteered to fly the pilot's body to Victoria. The flight to Victoria was uneventful. It was during the return flight that Bob had one of the weirdest experiences of his 30-year air force flying career.

May 13, 1958, was a good day for flying. There were scattered, puffy white clouds along their northeastward route, but the air was stable. Bob and First Officer Don P. were wheels up at 9:00 a.m. at Patricia Bay Airport (now Victoria International Airport) near Sidney, B.C. They were flying an IFR flight plan return trip from Victoria back to Cold Lake on a track that took them east over the northwestern tip of Washington State and the northern Cascade Range. As shown in Fig. 2, their track line continued over successive mountain ranges; the Columbia Mountains, the Selkirk Mountains, the Purcell Mountains, and finally the Rocky Mountains on their first leg, which would end at Turner Valley, Alberta, a mandatory check point. Their IFR flight plan dictated a turn to the northeast. This new leg of about 390 miles would take them directly over Calgary, Alberta.

The flight was going well. Bob remembers they were at either 7,000 or 9,000 feet on top of the clouds, which were still scattered and afforded an arresting panorama; so much so that Bob filmed them on an 8mm movie camera. Unfortunately, upon arriving at their mandatory position reporting point he had stowed the camera.

It was about 12:15 p.m. After turning to their new heading some 25 miles southwest of the edge of Calgary, the pilots noticed a giant and uncharacteristically black cloud that seemed to suddenly appear and lie directly across their flight path at the same altitude. The cloud, which was very thick from base to its top, stretched the width of the city of Calgary and increased in size as they approached it at about 155 miles per hour. Simultaneously with its appearance, their radios went dead—or perhaps more accurately they worked but their VHF communications with Cold Lake and Calgary suddenly ceased.

Fig. 3. Though thick and massive, note how white and fluffy this developing cumulonimbus appears.

There were two things about this cloud that were exceedingly odd, Bob related upon reflection. Its edges seemed indistinct, surrounded in a haze, and unlike the normally well-defined edges of cumulonimbus clouds. (See Fig. 3.) Secondly, this was early in the day for this kind of heavy cloud buildup, the type of towering cumulus usually associated with such a base. Thick as it was, this cloud was more in the manner of a thick cumulonimbus rather than a building thunder cell.

The two pilots were in a quandary. They were on an IFR flight plan that required thm to report in their position at Turner Valley and that forbade course and altitude deviation without getting permission—but their radios were not working. However, they were not inclined to fly into that black cloud.

Bob, who was the command pilot, passed control over to his copilot while he attempted to make contact with someone so they could get permission to update their flight plan around that cloud. He tried several times to raise Calgary only a few miles ahead, but they would not answer nor would Cold Lake some 375 miles away. The black cloud continued to grow in the windshield.

He finally heard someone talking to Lethbridge Tower radio, 100 miles south-southeast of Calgary, which on their present course was behind them at their 5 o'clock position. The cloud grew even larger in their windshield during the approxi-

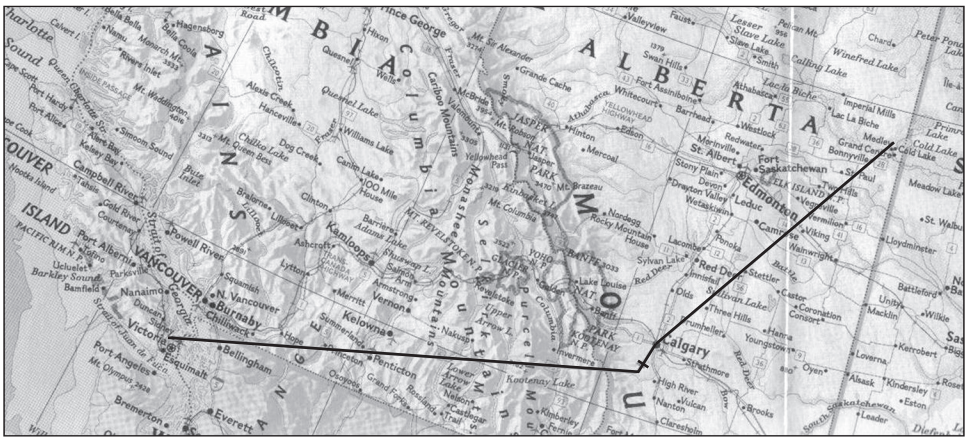


Fig. 2. Flight track of Dakota from Victoria to Turner Valley to Calgary to Cold Lake. The mark below Calgary shows approximate position when the black cloud was first seen.

mately 5–6 minutes it took to determine that Calgary wasn't going to answer and then establish contact with Lethbridge, whose tower operator was busy working other traffic.

The huge dark cloud was now estimated by the pilots to be about 10 miles ahead and lay menacingly right across their flight track. During the process of transmitting his position, Bob remembers holding the microphone and speaking into it while at the same time he saw an exceedingly brilliant-white pinpoint of light suddenly materialize in the dark cloud mass ahead. He broke off in mid-sentence. He watched this brilliance as it grew in size, taking the form of a brilliant ball of light. From his first glimpse of it as it seemed to come directly at the nose of the aircraft, until it grew in size filling his whole field of view, Bob estimates it took perhaps a maximum of seven seconds—very long seconds during which he noted a slowing down of time that we sometimes seem to experience when in an emergency situation.

Collision seemed unavoidable

Bob dropped the microphone and remembers disengaging his seat belt and rolling over his right arm rest. He threw his arms up and threw himself backward through the curtain and fell onto the cabin floor between the seats.

Bob fully expected to be a part of the Dakota's debris; a flaming ball of wreckage raining down into the northeastern Turner Valley after the collision. But nothing happened. Looking up from his position on the deck, he was shocked to see some of the military officers and enlisted personnel staring down at him in wonderment. He was still alive.

With a sheepish grin on his face, Bob quickly got back to his feet and reentered the cockpit of the DC-3 to find Don P. rigid in his seat, gripping the control yoke.

"I'm still flying it," he said without being asked. The event had happened so fast he had had no time to react to it.

"Then just like that, the black cloud suddenly vanished and we could hear Calgary working traffic just as clear as a bell," Bob remembered. This too was a real puzzle. He reestablished with Lethbridge and told them to disregard and contacted Calgary to make his position report.

"So what happened? Where did the light go?" I asked Bob. "Well that's the damndest thing." Bob told me. "We never even discussed it and we didn't report it when we got to Cold Lake. It filled our whole field of view, was brilliant, then it must have gone down one side of the aircraft or the other." He thought for sure he was going to be killed.

I asked Bob what he thought this might have been.

"I guess it must have been ball lightning." He assumed the light had been generated within the cloud and once free of it the cloud collapsed.

Bob did not then and does not now believe that there is anything to the phenomenon we often attribute to unidentified aerial phenomena (also known as UFO), but that there is a natural explanation for each UAP event. I did explain to him that ball lightning is still an unproven phenomenon and that most cases involve a sphere of small dimensions up to a foot in diameter.

Bob is 80 years old and still holds a pilot's license. He was in the Canadian Air Force for 30 years, retired in 1976, then went into civilian commercial aviation for another 10 years. He holds endorsements on floats and skis and has flown numerous types of aircraft: jets, B-25s, DC-3s, TBM Avengers—one of which nearly killed him when a prop blade separated from its hub—and numerous smaller aircraft of both military and civilian registrations. He still putters around in his experimental homebuilt aircraft.

I asked him why this event was so important to him. The question caught him off guard, as he didn't really assign real importance to it, but I reminded him that he remembered many small details of an event that happened 50 years ago.

"I suppose because I thought I was going to die," he replied.

Case 2

Silver sphere disconcerts pilot/police officer. North American Sector: East Coast of Canada.

A private pilot related to me that in July 1996 he had been flying his Piper Cherokee PA-28-140 (Fig. 4) from Waterville, Nova Scotia (my home turf), to Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, a distance of 110 statute miles. The pilot was also a police officer of 20 years. On this day he was returning his airplane to his home airport after getting his annual inspection completed. His father-in-law was in the right seat and his son was asleep in the back seat. They were level at 3,500 feet and the sky ceiling and visibility unlimited (CAVU).

Fig. 4. Piper Cherokee PA-28-140

They were crossing over Cape Blomidon (see Fig. 5 below) and almost to the water in Minas Basin, an inlet of the Bay of Fundy. It was the father-in-law who first spotted the anomaly. He pointed it out to the pilot who, looking out to his 11 o'clock position, spotted a chrome-colored sphere that he estimated to be about 60 feet in diameter about two miles away and traveling at the same speed as his aircraft. The father-in-law had spotted the sphere in the "v" created by the curve in the instrument panel and the window frame on the Cherokee. The pilot estimated that the object was about 500 feet lower than his aircraft and was dropping lower still. It appeared to be so highly polished that he could see the terrain on Cape Blomidon reflected in it. The UAP was between him and the terrain, which consisted of low hills rising to about 1,025 feet some five

(continued on page 22)

The Swamp Gas aftermath:

Some notes from the Gerald Ford files

by Bill Murphy

Controversy: The word characterizes, in the minds of many people, the short presidency of Gerald R. Ford. Those who remember the role of Rep. Ford (R-Mich.) in the Warren Commission might also use that term. But a series of events sandwiched between the assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy and Watergate involved then–House Minority Leader Ford in another controversy.

The UFO-related events of spring 1966 left little mark in the general historical record, and what notice they provoked may have crossed into notoriety.[1] Yet Gerald Ford's call for a congressional investigation of UFOs and the Air Force response to them was a pivotal event for ufology. Writing to Ford as the assistant director of the National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena on April 6, 1966 (see letter on page 13), Richard Hall congratulated Ford for his political courage and forthrightness, stating, "History will record the important role you have played in helping to bring about a rational study of UFOs and public enlightenment on the subject."

Ford's activity helped make studying UFOs as respectable as it would ever be, raised the interest of the common American citizen for the subject, and provided perhaps the best hope ever for a full governmental accounting of what it knew about the phenomenon. Ironically, Gerald Ford also helped initiate a chain of events leading to the Colorado Project and perhaps the single greatest public setback to ufology, a reversal from which it has yet to recover, 40 years after the publication of the project's findings.

Skeptical writer Robert Sheaffer has written: "Several pro-UFO congressmen, including House Minority Leader Gerald R. Ford, began to pressure the Air Force into devoting more money and manpower to UFOs—and hence, presumably, to come up with a more acceptable (that is, a more pro-UFO) conclusion."[2] Neither the term "pro-UFO" nor the suggestion that Congressman Ford was trying to engineer such a verdict are remotely justified. On the other hand, those more favorable towards the UFO subject have perhaps overemphasized the Michigan congressman's role in ufological history, and made of him too much a "UFO hero." A fuller study of the original documents from Gerald Ford's congressional years produces a slightly more complex but more accurate understanding of the man and his role than either of these two opposed perspectives. What we learn may also lend to a rather better understanding of the man's actions in both of the other, more famous, controversies.

The Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library graces the North Campus of the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Opened to the public in 1981, the library houses 25 million pages of documents, and a half-million audiovisual items. While the first thing that comes to mind may be the archival materials from Ford's presidential years, the files from Ford's long-time service in Congress possess a particular wealth of interest to ufology. The UFO-pertinent material in the Ford Congressional Files constitutes part of a vast collection of press releases, interviews, news clippings, and correspondence between the Michigan congressman and others across the country and beyond.

At the instance of Ohio MUFON State Director Bill Jones, I have been working in the Ford collection since late 2007, studying more than 1,000 documents so far, totaling

Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor.

Bill Murphy is a long-time UFO researcher from Michigan and a member of the CUFOS Board. He was the state director of Michigan MUFON in the 1990s.

more than 1,700 pages of material.[3] The Legislative Files dealing with the UFO issue include almost 600 letters to Ford from constituents and copies of more than 175 letters Ford had written to these people. Private individuals sent petitions of support to Congressman Ford, included cartoons, some of their own creation, asked for help with term papers and debates, proposed business ideas, offered their own explanations or help in solving the UFO "puzzle," and recommended Ford contact certain individuals or read certain books on the subject. The congressional correspondence also includes letters to and from political and military people in the government. The Ford papers constitute a microcosm of the personalities and positions in ufology, displaying the full spectrum of opinions, passions, and passionate people who became enmeshed in the subject.

While we know what documents *were* preserved in the Ford collection, we do not know what correspondence *was not* saved for posterity. The tone of several of the letters to Congressman Ford indicates that a fairly wide array of perspectives and emotional levels was retained, among them some rather coarse messages, but we do see references to letters that were likely rather innocuous and have not been preserved, so we may judge it probable that other letters were destroyed. Not all communications were answered; some of the more extreme, in particular, may not have received responses.[4]

We do not know exactly when every individual letter was received by Congressman Ford's office, but the dates when approximately 535 letters were composed or sent can be reasonably inferred, either through letter headings or sometimes by the postmarks on postcards and envelopes where these have also been preserved. Bearing in mind that when a letter was actually sent may not be the same date as when it was written, this seems the best available procedure to understand the character of the set. About 50 letters do not yet promote a specific guess at a day-date, although the dates of Ford's responses often provide a *terminus ante quem*.

The preserved set of "swamp gas UFO" letters to Ford begins with a single note from March 23, a letter to Rep. Weston E. Vivian (D-Mich.) that was later passed on to Ford. The production rises quickly to peak at around 40 letters per day written or sent on March 28 and 29, respectively, then just as quickly drops to about a dozen on April 1. The production holds in the 10–13 range from then until April 6, and sags to a 2–3 per day average through April 21.

A handwritten tally apparently recording the reception dates for the correspondence follows the same distribution pattern as the approximate dates when the letters were composed, roughly agrees with the numbers of letters actually in the Ford files, and indicates that the "deluge" at the office began the day when actual production of these letters began to tail off. There is a secondary spate of communications from April 23 through 29, peaking on April 25, mostly due to two sets of postcards, almost all from California addresses (all located in the same collection folder). Generally from the end of April about one or fewer pieces per day were written, with gaps between letters of as much as 10 days by late October. A small bubble of interest runs from late October 1967 through January of the next year, largely surrounding the October 17 resolution of Rep. Louis C. Wyman (R-N.H.) to the Committee on Science and Astronautics calling for hearings on the UFO question. From this point on most of the correspondence comes from ufologists, entrepreneurs, occasional students needing help with assignments, and some "repeaters" with strong points of view.

Louis C. Wyman

In a message to House Armed Services Chairman L. Mendel Rivers (D-S.C.) of March 28, 1966, Ford referred to a telegram from Mrs. Ethyle M. Davis, of Eugene, Oregon, that read: "Nine out of ten people want truth of UFO's." In actuality, the positive percentages among the Ford correspondents exceeded this estimate: Through the end of April more than 95% of the communications were favorable towards Ford's call or the subject of UFOs generally.[5]

Ufologists in the correspondence

The Ford Legislative Files contain a copy of a letter (see page 13) from Dr. James E. McDonald to Rep. Morris Udall (D-Ariz.). McDonald asked Udall to pass the copy to Ford "to add further support to the spirit of his suggestions and to convey a suggestion for an easier alternative to a major hearing." McDonald feared that an open congressional hearing could become a circus for UFO crackpots and silly press treatment. Instead, McDonald proposed an extremely low-key activity by a small panel of scientists chosen by an independent body such as the National Academy of Sciences. This panel would hear from experts who had some familiarity with the problem, and might even conduct "two or three pilot studies of some of the more unusual recent UFO reports, including the Michigan incidents, to try to ascertain whether any scientific considerations are being overlooked in routine studies by groups such as Air Force Project Blue Book."

James E. McDonald

Though not part of the letters folders, Box D113 of the Congressional Papers contains an interesting handwritten message from McDonald to Ford, attached to a paper the scientist had given before the Canadian Aeronautics and Space Institute on March 12, 1968. McDonald writes, "Mr. Ford: Your 1966 efforts to get the UFO problem clarified appear to have led to only very slight progress. USAF continues to yawn."

A July 29, 1966, letter from Blue Book consultant Dr. J. Allen Hynek to a citizen interested in UFOs made its way

into Congressman Ford's files. Hynek expresses his personal feeling that the Ravenna case (also called the "Portage County, Ohio" UFO police chase of April 17, 1966) should be considered unidentified and has so informed the Air Force, and that, though its evaluation as "satellite-Venus" would not have come from him, he is frequently blamed for it because he is an astronomer. He further admonishes, "Please remember, I am a consultant, not a setter of policy. That is done way up in the Pentagon."

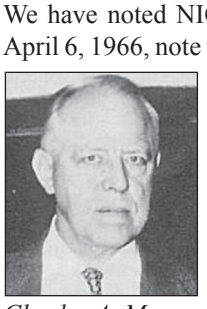
In a copy of a letter dated November 5, 1964 (see page 13), Hynek affirmed a statement he had made that Deputy Lonnie Zamora's story about his Socorro, New Mexico, sighting of a craft and occupants on April 24, 1964, "was indeed told by a man who obviously was frightened badly by what he did see." Hynek added, with great candor, "I wish I could, for my own peace of mind, dismiss the Socorro sighting as a hoax or a hallucination, but in all honesty I cannot."

A correspondent forwarded a letter sent to him by then Project Blue Book head Major Hector Quintanilla Jr. The correspondent had predicted that Quintanilla and President Johnson would eventually look foolish when there was undeniable proof of extraterrestrial visitors, and that an uninformed public would panic. Quintanilla's stiff reply rejected these charges, stating, "I'm still waiting for that alleged UFO to land as you state in your letter. People have been observing UFOs since at least 593 B.C., so I'm not worried that people will panic because of such observations." Quintanilla added that he had read Frank Edwards's book and considered it an excellent job of storytelling, but that was his own personal opinion and not that of the Air Force.

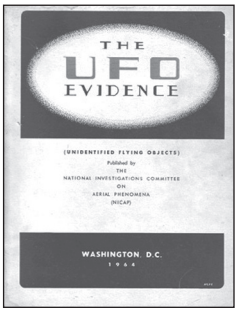
Maj. Hector Quintanilla Jr.

Responding to a Connecticut writer who suggested he contact the National Investigations Committee on Aerial Phenomena, Ford wrote "that I have had extensive correspondence as well as phone calls with the staff and directors of the Committee as well as with many of their membership across the country."

Indeed, a rather large number of letters from NICAP members, associate members, and officials came Ford's way. We have noted NICAP Assistant Director Richard Hall's April 6, 1966, note to Ford. NICAP Board Member Charles A. Maney had already written Ford on March 29, imploring the congressman to contact NICAP for the proof that the Air Force was withholding evidence, and for help in bringing out the facts on UFOs, at least some of which Maney was certain were space objects. NICAP member Robert E. Barrow wrote Ford at least eight times in support of the Congressman's call for investigations, expressing his concerns about the course of the issue, from March 26, 1966, through May 1968. NICAP was invariably treated with respect, in spite of one correspondent accusing them of "Gestapo-like" tactics. Several times Ford recommended Richard Hall's *The UFO Evidence* in his correspondence, and suggested that students and others contact NICAP for information, providing the Committee's address.



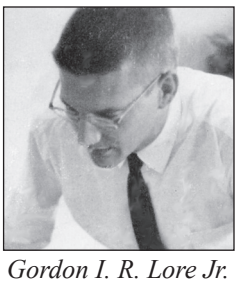
Charles A. Maney



NICAP's UFO Evidence, 1964

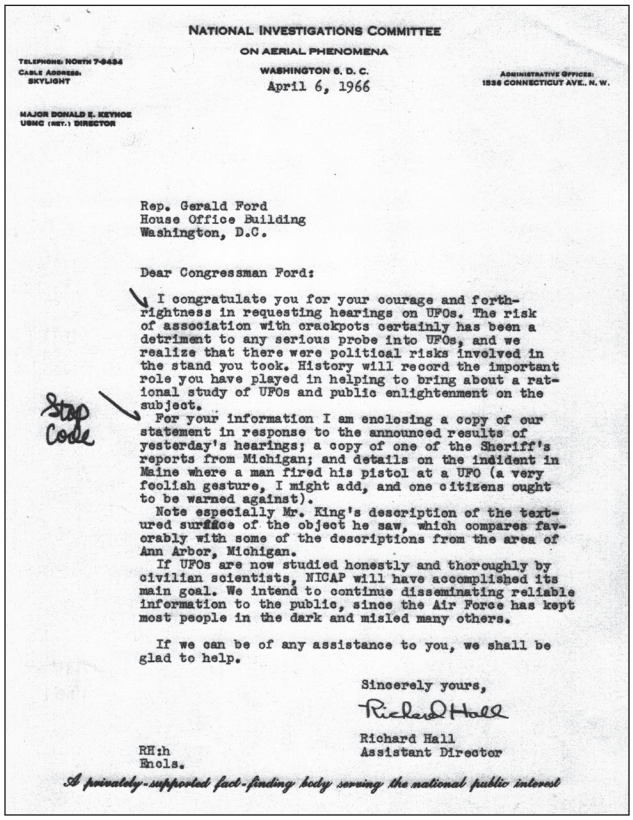
NICAP Pittsburgh Subcommittee Chairman William B. Weitzel wrote often to Ford about the April 17, 1966, sighting and chase of an unidentified flying object by two Portage County, Ohio, deputy sheriffs and other law enforcement officers. Nearly all of two folders are dedicated to this input. Weitzel was particularly frustrated by the cavalier treatment he felt was given the event and the two primary peace officers by Maj. Quintanilla, recognized similarities with the treatment of the Michigan sightings and sighters a month previously by Project Blue Book, and felt that Congressman Ford would concur. The indefatigable Weitzel wrote and called numerous military, governmental, and Blue Book officials to attempt to get a revision of the Air Force's conclusion that the sheriff's deputies had misidentified an artificial satellite and then the planet Venus, and copied much of his correspondence to Ford's office. It appears that the details Weitzel provided on the Ohio sighting and its aftermath were a little too much for the Michigan congressman's interest.[6] Weitzel would acknowledge this in a later letter, and from that point focused rather on Portage County as illustrating the larger issue of Blue Book's mishandling of UFO reports, and that something needed to be done to correct the negative impacts upon UFO reporters.

NICAP Assistant Director Gordon I. R. Lore Jr. wrote Ford and his aide Dorothy Hessler twice in late 1967 about a Russian commission that had been set up to investigate UFOs. Lore wrote Ford again in May 1968, and sent Ford a cover note on June 21, 1968, along with a copy of the latest NICAP bulletin, *The U.F.O. Investigator,* and Ford received additional issues from his correspondents. Several letters in the Legislative Files cover interchanges between Gerald Ford and young associate NICAP members, including an energetic Maryland representative to the NICAP Youth Council named Gary P. Posner, who first wrote Ford on March 25. Posner later had what amounted to a "conversion" to "critical thinking" under the influence of Phillip Klass, and in 1988 founded a group called the Tampa Bay Skeptics.



Gordon I. R. Lore Jr.

British NICAP Associate Member Julian J. A. Hennessey also wrote Ford twice, once seeking the congressman's opinions on the subject, and once expressing misgivings about the Colorado Project's being understaffed, while supporting



NATIONAL INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE
ON AERIAL PHENOMENA
WASHINGTON 6, D. C.
April 6, 1966

TELEPHONE: NORTH 7-6434
CABLE ADDRESS: SKYLIGHT
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES: 1536 CONNECTICUT AVE., N. W.

MAJOR DONALD E. KEYHOE USMC (RET.) DIRECTOR

Rep. Gerald Ford
House Office Building
Washington, D.C.

Dear Congressman Ford:

I congratulate you for your courage and forthrightness in requesting hearings on UFOs. The risk of association with crackpots certainly has been a detriment to any serious probe into UFOs, and we realize that there were political risks involved in the stand you took. History will record the important role you have played in helping to bring about a rational study of UFOs and public enlightenment on the subject.

Stop Code

For your information I am enclosing a copy of our statement in response to the announced results of yesterday's hearings; a copy of one of the Sheriff's reports from Michigan; and details on the incident in Maine where a man fired his pistol at a UFO (a very foolish gesture, I might add, and one citizens ought to be warned against).

Note especially Mr. King's description of the textured surface of the object he saw, which compares favorably with some of the descriptions from the area of Ann Arbor, Michigan.

If UFOs are now studied honestly and thoroughly by civilian scientists, NICAP will have accomplished its main goal. We intend to continue disseminating reliable information to the public, since the Air Force has kept most people in the dark and misled many others.

If we can be of any assistance to you, we shall be glad to help.

Sincerely yours,

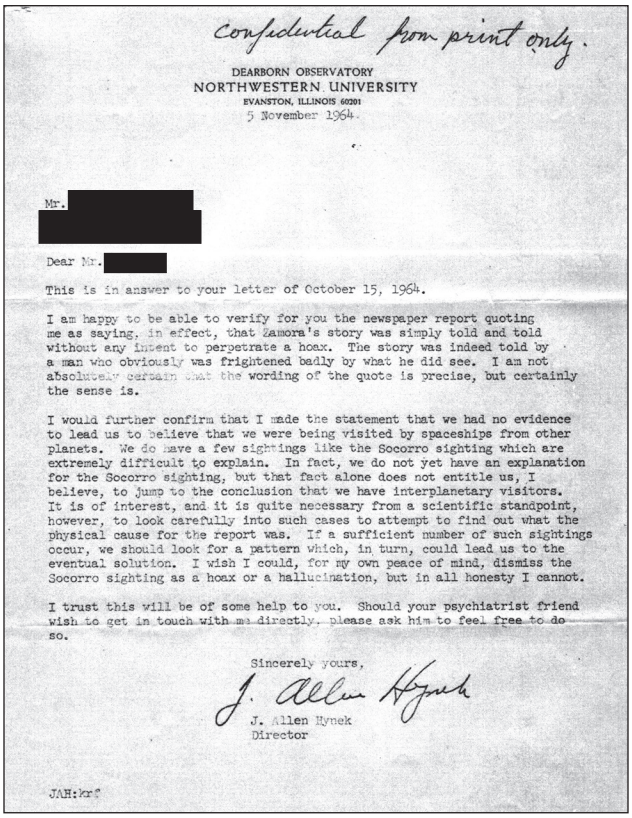
Richard Hall

Richard Hall
Assistant Director

RH:h
Encls.

A privately-supported fact-finding body serving the national public interest

Letter from NICAP Assistant Director Richard Hall to Rep. Gerald Ford, April 6, 1966.



Confidential for print only.

DEARBORN OBSERVATORY
NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY
EVANSTON, ILLINOIS 60201
5 November 1964.

Mr. [redacted]

Dear Mr. [redacted]

This is in answer to your letter of October 15, 1964.

I am happy to be able to verify for you the newspaper report quoting me as saying, in effect, that Zamora's story was simply told and told without any intent to perpetrate a hoax. The story was indeed told by a man who obviously was frightened badly by what he did see. I am not absolutely certain that the wording of the quote is precise, but certainly the sense is.

I would further confirm that I made the statement that we had no evidence to lead us to believe that we were being visited by spaceships from other planets. We do have a few sightings like the Socorro sighting which are extremely difficult to explain. In fact, we do not yet have an explanation for the Socorro sighting, but that fact alone does not entitle us, I believe, to jump to the conclusion that we have interplanetary visitors. It is of interest, and it is quite necessary from a scientific standpoint, however, to look carefully into such cases to attempt to find out what the physical cause for the report was. If a sufficient number of such sightings occur, we should look for a pattern which, in turn, could lead us to the eventual solution. I wish I could, for my own peace of mind, dismiss the Socorro sighting as a hoax or a hallucination, but in all honesty I cannot.

I trust this will be of some help to you. Should your psychiatrist friend wish to get in touch with me directly, please ask him to feel free to do so.

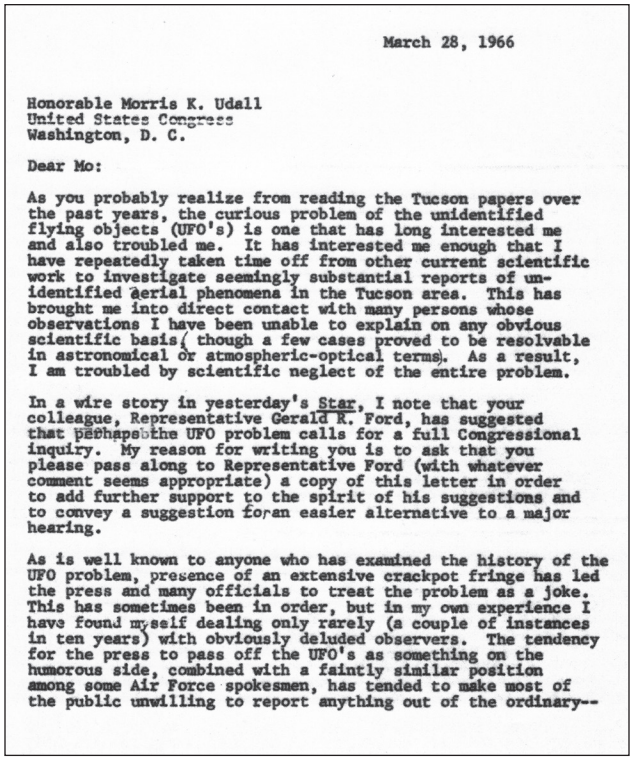
Sincerely yours,

J. Allen Hynek

J. Allen Hynek
Director

JAH:krf

Letter from USAF Consultant J. Allen Hynek to a private citizen who had inquired about the Socorro case, November 5, 1964.



March 28, 1966

Honorable Morris K. Udall
United States Congress
Washington, D. C.

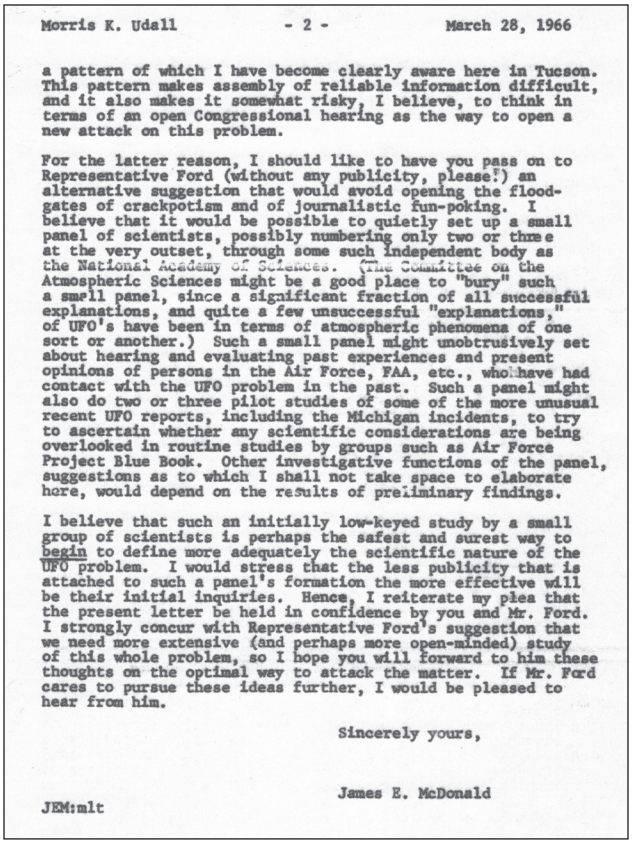
Dear Mo:

As you probably realize from reading the Tucson papers over the past years, the curious problem of the unidentified flying objects (UFO's) is one that has long interested me and also troubled me. It has interested me enough that I have repeatedly taken time off from other current scientific work to investigate seemingly substantial reports of unidentified aerial phenomena in the Tucson area. This has brought me into direct contact with many persons whose observations I have been unable to explain on any obvious scientific basis (though a few cases proved to be resolvable in astronomical or atmospheric-optical terms). As a result, I am troubled by scientific neglect of the entire problem.

In a wire story in yesterday's Star, I note that your colleague, Representative Gerald R. Ford, has suggested that perhaps the UFO problem calls for a full Congressional inquiry. My reason for writing you is to ask that you please pass along to Representative Ford (with whatever comment seems appropriate) a copy of this letter in order to add further support to the spirit of his suggestions and to convey a suggestion for an easier alternative to a major hearing.

As is well known to anyone who has examined the history of the UFO problem, presence of an extensive crackpot fringe has led the press and many officials to treat the problem as a joke. This has sometimes been in order, but in my own experience I have found myself dealing only rarely (a couple of instances in ten years) with obviously deluded observers. The tendency for the press to pass off the UFO's as something on the humorous side, combined with a faintly similar position among some Air Force spokesmen, has tended to make most of the public unwilling to report anything out of the ordinary--

Two-page letter from physicist James E. McDonald to Rep. Morris K. Udall, March 28, 1966, asking him to talk to Gerald Ford about setting up a scientific UFO panel.



Morris K. Udall - 2 - March 28, 1966

a pattern of which I have become clearly aware here in Tucson. This pattern makes assembly of reliable information difficult, and it also makes it somewhat risky, I believe, to think in terms of an open Congressional hearing as the way to open a new attack on this problem.

For the latter reason, I should like to have you pass on to Representative Ford (without any publicity, please!) an alternative suggestion that would avoid opening the floodgates of crackpotism and of journalistic fun-poking. I believe that it would be possible to quietly set up a small panel of scientists, possibly numbering only two or three at the very outset, through some such independent body as the National Academy of Sciences. The Committee on the Atmospheric Sciences might be a good place to "bury" such a small panel, since a significant fraction of all successful explanations, and quite a few unsuccessful "explanations," of UFO's have been in terms of atmospheric phenomena of one sort or another.) Such a small panel might unobtrusively set about hearing and evaluating past experiences and present opinions of persons in the Air Force, FAA, etc., who have had contact with the UFO problem in the past. Such a panel might also do two or three pilot studies of some of the more unusual recent UFO reports, including the Michigan incidents, to try to ascertain whether any scientific considerations are being overlooked in routine studies by groups such as Air Force Project Blue Book. Other investigative functions of the panel, suggestions as to which I shall not take space to elaborate here, would depend on the results of preliminary findings.

I believe that such an initially low-keyed study by a small group of scientists is perhaps the safest and surest way to begin to define more adequately the scientific nature of the UFO problem. I would stress that the less publicity that is attached to such a panel's formation the more effective will be their initial inquiries. Hence, I reiterate my plea that the present letter be held in confidence by you and Mr. Ford. I strongly concur with Representative Ford's suggestion that we need more extensive (and perhaps more open-minded) study of this whole problem, so I hope you will forward to him these thoughts on the optimal way to attack the matter. If Mr. Ford cares to pursue these ideas further, I would be pleased to hear from him.

Sincerely yours,

James E. McDonald

JEM:mlt

the notion of a full Congressional investigation.

Allen R. Utke, a Wisconsin State University–Oshkosh assistant professor of chemistry, wrote Ford on November 30, 1967, to support House Resolution 946 sponsored by Rep. Louis C. Wyman (see text at www.project1947.com/shg/symposium/hr946.html). Utke, a NICAP member and APRO consultant, believed he was perhaps the only scientist actively investigating UFO reports in Wisconsin and Upper Michigan, and remarked on an "*inconclusive* pattern" he had noted in the cases he'd investigated that convinced him "that this phenomenon *could* be of great importance and concern to this country." Handwritten at the top of this letter was "Dorothy" (probably Ford's aide Dorothy Hessler) and "Very interesting."

UFO researcher Ted Bloecher wrote to Ford in late March 1966 to support Ford's call for congressional hearings, saying he wanted to see "a long overdue, responsible, investigation of a genuine mystery." A month later Bloecher wrote to express his misgivings about the testimony before the House Armed Services Subcommittee on April 5, especially a statement by Maj. Quintanilla that "We have no radar cases which are unexplained." Bloecher countered Quintanilla's testimony with three such cases that occurred in a space of two weeks, as recorded in a book by the former head of Project Blue Book, Capt. Edward Ruppelt. Ford's response was that, indeed, he found Maj. Quintanilla's testimony to be ambiguous, was pleased that Bloecher had also sent his written rejoinder to the current Blue Book chief, and would be interested to hear the outcome. In February 1968 Bloecher sent Ford a copy of his now-classic *Report on the UFO Wave of 1947*.

Ted Bloecher

Jerome Clark wrote to commend Ford, making the point that "If there are indeed unknown craft flying through the atmosphere, security interests demand that we know it as soon as possible." Larry W. Bryant suggested that Ford contact Rep. John E. Moss (D-Calif.), as Moss might be able to counsel Ford on how his proposal could be put into effect. Gordon C. Sayer had several good exchanges with Congressman Ford. The Kalamazoo, Michigan, Ph.D. wrote Ford on April 19, 1966, supporting the House Minority Leader's advocacy of a thorough UFO investigation, and enclosing a copy of an impressive report of a dramatic sighting that occurred within 15 miles of Kalamazoo, on the last day of March.

Dr. R. Leo Sprinkle wrote in favor of an investigation of UFO reports but, like many other UFO investigators, urged "that any congressional inquiry should lead, hopefully, to the establishment of a team of specialists who might conduct a scientific investigation of the phenomena." Dr. Frank Stranges wrote several times to the House Minority Leader, pledging his cooperation if asked for assistance, and asking on the progress of the investigation. Ford's staff could not always read the signatures of their correspondents: Two carbon copy versions of a Ford October 11 reply to Stranges are in the Ford archives, one being addressed to "Dr. Frank S. Stranger."

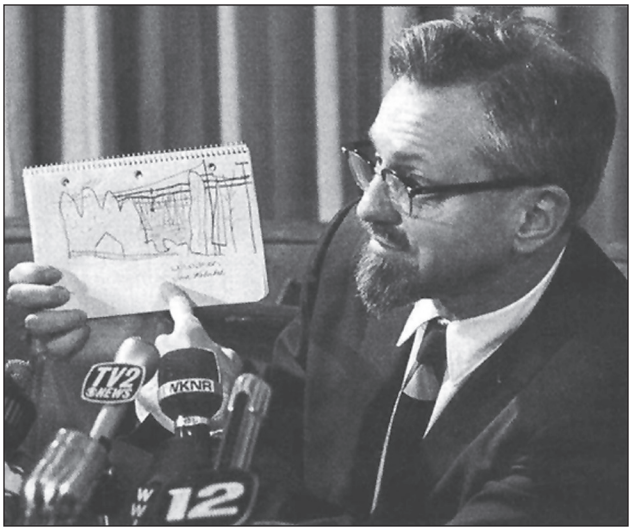
Contactee Wayne Aho first wrote Ford early on in support of his call for an investigation. By the end of 1967, Aho had reservations about the Colorado Project, providing Ford with two examples of bias or levity by Project Leader Dr. Edward U. Condon, which from Aho's point of view raised serious doubts about the seriousness of the investigation. Aho proposed that NASA conduct a full-fledged investigation with regular reports to the public, the establishment of a congressional and presidential oversight panel, and a wide-ranging congressional hearing covering all aspects of the UFO subject, including sightings, radar reports, and actual contact reports. Ford's response of December 11 was generic and failed to address the points raised in Aho's letter. Aho would keep up his correspondence with Ford, however, beating upon the twin drums of the Condon Committee's dereliction of its duties and a fear of the Soviets outpacing America in UFO studies.

Wayne Aho

William E. Van Horn was Civil Defense director of Hillsdale County, Michigan, when he was part of the famous sightings in late March 1966. Incensed at the insufficient investigation and "swamp-gas" explanation by Hynek, Van Horn sent a four-part report to his Congressman, Edward Hutchinson, a copy of which he also sent to Congressman Ford.

Average citizens

The correspondence between House Minority Leader Ford and "average citizens" has a great deal of charm. (It should be made clear that, while many are Michigan writers, more



At a hastily called news conference in March 1966, J. Allen Hynek shows a sketch made by a witness in the Michigan UFO sightings. His suggestion that the UFOs might be "swamp gas" (methane biogas) touched off a furor he later termed as the "low point of my association with UFOs."

come from outside the state and some from outside the country.) The correspondence is also interesting for the gamut of thoughts these people had on the cause of the Michigan sightings, the advisability of a congressional investigation into the methods and findings of the Air Force and Project Blue Book, and on UFO phenomena in general. The twin focal points of much of current ufology, Roswell and UFO-related abductions, find no or extremely little place in these materials. Many correspondents opined that the hundreds of reliable people who had reported UFOs could not all be wrong, and that the American public was mature enough to be told the truth. Several letters from common citizens provided information on personal UFO sightings, some from many years previous. There are boomerangs, shiny footballs, and metallic cigars; stories come from Quebec and Italy; sightings from 1913, 1925, and 1953; and there are sightings during military service and wartime. One woman said she was offered a ride in a spaceship, but declined because she had dogs and cats that needed her care.

Many of these people offered Ford assistance of various sorts. Several wanted to testify before Congress. Some correspondents proffered explanations for the mystery, or help in solving it. An Arkansas man was sure he could tell where the machine that people were seeing was made and how it operated, but thought he should get a good job or a big reward for the information. A Texas oilman said that, if provided with living expenses, he was willing to camp out near some of these marshes and was sure he could get to the bottom of the matter. One housewife wrote that, from personal experience, she thought UFOs were connected to dope rings that operated around colleges. She told of harassment she and her family had received for reporting the odd goings-on near her farm, and was afraid to sign her name "as I was scared to pieces before."

Other writers expressed wider concerns. A Washington woman wrote her support of Ford's call for a congressional investigation, but also to express her unease about people firing guns at UFOs. She suggested that a law be passed forbidding the killing or attempted killing of any non-belligerent creature in or from a UFO, both from considerations of morality and also possible retaliation.

That such fears were not without merit is shown by a report of a Maine man who fired four shots from a pistol at a UFO on March 23, 1966, in the words of NICAP Assistant Director Richard Hall, "a very foolish gesture . . . and one citizens ought to be warned against." Some average citizens were decidedly of the opinion that the purported occupants of the UFOs were friendly, in this belief echoing the thoughts of more prominent believers like Wayne Aho, Laura Mundo, Buck Nelson, and Madeleine Rodeffer. Some of these writers held up the possibility that scientific information and answers to unsolved health problems could come from friendly contact. While the bulk of the letters to Ford that have been preserved are well-written and represent the common citizen trying to come to grips with an apparently real mystery, there are exotic tales of the hollow earth, direct letters from "archangels" and people possessing the "Master's Degree in astro intelligence," and channeled messages from Orthon of Venus and Jai Alai of the Solar System of Solarius. Some letter writers mix their UFO enthusiasms with complaints about foreign aid, Fabian socialists in the government, and jazz masses. Ford did talk about some of these "far out" letters in a March 30 radio tape for radio stations in his district, quoting several of them, one at length. But Ford went on to say that he thought that the American people wanted a better explanation of UFOs than they had been getting, and that "If my mail is any indication, there are many, many people who find it extremely difficult to believe some of the stories put out by the government on this and other subjects." After the initial excitement of spring 1966 died down, letters from average citizens tended to turn more towards the progress of the investigation, interspersed with letters from people, especially students, requesting UFO information.

The Colorado Project

When information came out on April 21, 1966, that the Air Force was going to contract with a university to do an objective study, Ford correspondents, particularly those with NICAP affiliations, expressed misgivings that any university, no matter which one, could do a truly independent job. One writer felt that no investigation of past sightings could "prove" the reality of UFOs one way or another, and that what was needed was a program using Geiger counters and other objective scientific instrumentation.

Edward U. Condon

There seems to have been little reaction among Ford's correspondents about the UFO project specifically going to the University of Colorado, although one person would later say he would have preferred that the contract had gone to a Michigan university. What was expressed about the University of Colorado team, directed by physicist Edward U. Condon, was at first neutral or mildly positive, although early on one writer voiced concerns that none of the full-time people had PhDs. Later one writer called the people "top men."

When Rep. Wyman proposed a congressional UFO hearing, a number of people seconded that as preferable to the ongoing university investigation. In late 1967 Wayne Aho relayed his misgivings, and in early May 1968, with the impending *Look* magazine release of John G. Fuller's article "Flying Saucer Fiasco" about internal strife within the Colorado Project, NICAP members expressed severe doubts and sent Ford copies of the NICAP pronouncements on the matter. Some "average citizens" who had read the David Saunders book *UFOs? Yes!* also relayed their dismay. Some questioned Edward Condon's political background; others attacked, apparently, the breadth of his scientific

training as sufficient to comprehend the totality of UFO phenomena. There are some sharp reactions in late January and through February 1969 to the project's report and its National Academy of Sciences review, but these are from especially interested parties; the average citizen seems not to have reacted, at least not to Ford's office.

Handling the correspondence

Within the constrictions of their other correspondence duties and the spate of missives attaching to the UFO question, Ford's staff tried to be responsive to his constituents. It appears that Ford would review his correspondence and make notes in the margins of some of the letters. Some of the approximately 14-person House Minority Leader's staff would then compose responses to the letters that were to be answered, and then Ford would review and usually sign the outgoing letters before they were sealed and sent to post.

In several instances the congressman's office passed on questions to elements of the military, and secured their responses. One staffer, James Bersie, was tasked to write most of the UFO-related responses for Ford's office, likely by April 1. Bersie appears to have kept this post through the end of 1966, being succeeded by a "kh," and then in April 1967 by Dorothy Hessler, who is the UFO point person through the publication of the Colorado Project's final report. We can gain an appreciation of the congressman's approach to the UFO problem from the correspondence itself, and from handwritten notes on many of the letters, supplemented by the Ford news releases and interviews preserved in the library's archives.

The Ford staff utilized a series of successive templates for their responses to the general correspondence, tailoring the general "boilerplate" material depending upon whether the individual had indicated support, wanted general information, and/or had specific questions. Either as generic examples, because the staff wanted copies of certain missives, or because they were returned in the mail due to address or postage problems, we have examples of these standard letters. Initially, most correspondents received variations on the theme of thanking them for their support, and continuing:

> It is proper for the Federal government to look into a matter which is causing alarm to the people of our nation as these sightings have, and it is for this reason that I have called for the investigation.
>
> Such an inquiry is necessary and wholesome because of the incidents that have occurred and I assure you that I will continue to press for this investigation. I want you to know that your specific comments were helpful to me in this respect, and that your remarks do not go unheeded . . .[7]

After April 5, recipients generally received letters emphasizing that the House Committee on Armed Services had held a hearing as a result of the congressman's request. Ford would go on to say that the proposal of a scientific panel, chosen by the National Academy of Sciences, to investigate the more than 600 unexplained UFO sightings reported by the Air Force, was "a good first step." Later Ford responses would note, with some apparent occasional dissatisfaction, the mutations of this proposal, Ford continuing to sound his repeated recommendations for a full congressional investigation.

In 1967 Ford would express hopes that "The current research being done at the University of Colorado may shed some light on these hitherto unexplained phenomena," and that it would "provide the public with all the facts we need about UFOs." In May 1968, after the infamous "Low Memorandum" had surfaced, Ford expressed concerns about the trajectory of the project both to NICAP officials and "average citizen" correspondents.

Occasionally some of the letters elicited comments by the Ford readers beyond underscoring of a missive's main points and notes on how to answer them. Handwritten quips were added to the margins of the first part of a July 13, 1966, letter. Next to the writer's opening statement, "During the last four weeks I have been reading books concerning unidentified flying objects," someone wrote "good, fine." To the following, "Quite frankly, I have never been interested in this matter before," the reader wrote, "Well, we all develop new interests from time to time." The beginning to the next typed sentence seems to have changed the Ford team member's attitude: "By profession I am a political scientist." The rest of the letter elicited no more light observations, but did prompt an unusually long, detailed, and responsive return from Ford.

Ford's attitude toward UFOs

Gerald Ford had almost no interest in unidentified flying objects prior to the events of late March 1966, and these events and the furor they engendered did not much increase his interest in UFOs per se.[8] There is no evidence that Ford actually read much UFO literature. Several times Ford would send letter writers material he had received from other letter writers, with the comment that he didn't know how good it was.

Ford's concerns after the Michigan sightings and the famous "swamp gas" explanation by J. Allen Hynek were limited to the alarm that many Americans experienced from the events, the cavalier treatment that many UFO witnesses received from Air Force investigators, the belief that the American people deserved a more full and complete explanation from the Air Force than they had been provided, and the desire for a full and open airing of both the Air Force position and the stories of some witnesses before the American public, who could then decide the matter for themselves.

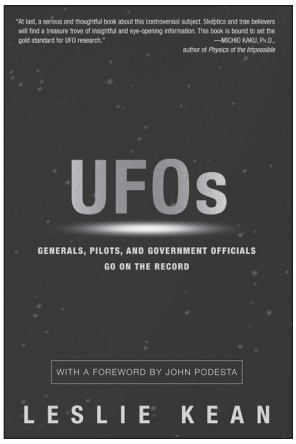
In an April 19, 1966, letter to a New Jersey man who had attacked his call for an investigation and had implied that Ford believed in "little green men," "flying saucers," and a "super race of men living in the North Pole," Ford retorted, "I have never said that I believe any of the reported UFO sightings indicate visits to earth from another planet...

(continued on page 20)

Book reviews

UFOs: Generals, Pilots, and Government Officials Go on the Record, by Leslie Kean. New York: Harmony Books, 2010. ISBN 978-0-307-71684-2. 315p.

Even in the deeply unlikely event that you may have thought otherwise, it bears mentioning that UFOs haven't gone away. It's worth noting because as early as July 1947 UFOs—flying saucers then, of course—were already being written of (and off) in the past tense. One imagines that those who held that sentiment even then were consumed with the will to believe that it be so.


"At last, a serious and thoughtful book about this controversial subject. Skeptics and true believers will find a treasure trove of insightful and eye-opening information. This book is bound to set the gold standard for UFO research."
—MICHIO KAKU, Ph.D., author of *Physics of the Impossible*
UFOs
GENERALS, PILOTS, AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS GO ON THE RECORD
WITH A FOREWORD BY JOHN PODESTA
LESLIE KEAN

Those in the business of constructing falsifiable hypotheses would have predicted that flying saucers would collapse of their own absence of weight. They would never show up on radar except in erroneous readings; there would be no physical evidence; witnesses would overwhelmingly be fringe characters; the sightings would be mostly of distant, nebulous light sources; hoaxes would play a major role in the most interesting cases; few if any reports could stand up to intensive investigation. So thin a wisp would blow away as soon as the winds of popular culture brought the next fad along.

So here we are, more than six decades into the UFO controversy, with uncountable sightings, well-documented and impenetrably puzzling encounters, instrumented observations, landing traces, any number of observations of structured craft seen under excellent viewing conditions by multiple and independent witnesses—just about everything short of wreckage and bodies (these alleged but never proved) to establish that an extraordinary anomaly, to every appearance and none (notwithstanding gale-force winds of rhetoric) to the contrary, is the product of an advanced technology not known currently on this planet.

One may as well toss in the surely not-irrelevant consideration that in recent years, fulfilling a key prediction of ufology's extraterrestrial hypothesis, steadily growing numbers of extrasolar planets—their existence suspected but not established in the early decades of the UFO era—have been detected, giving astronomers reason to extrapolate that as many as 100 billion stars in the Milky Way alone harbor earthlike planets, a staggering number of which may house intelligent civilizations. If that is the case, then a visible presence of visiting alien races is not just more likely than not but actually *to be expected*. (A non-ET presence, one might further argue, suggests that intelligence is rare, maybe even nonexistent, outside earth.) As SETI pioneer Frank Drake has said, if UFOs are real, they are extraterrestrial. No heretic, he quickly adds that since ETs can't get here, UFOs can't be. He doesn't actually *know* that under no circumstances could anybody ever cross interstellar space, naturally, but to those receptive to such pseudo-arguments, the blanket dismissal is so anxiety-alleviating as to put receptive brains to sleep. "In normal scientific research," astrophysicist Peter Sturrock rejoins, "observational evidence takes precedence over theory. If it does happen, it can happen."

It can and does happen all the time, and all over the world, and by now nothing except some people's wishful thinking, buttressed by withering ridicule of witnesses and advocates, seems likely to stop it any time in any foreseeable future. Either human beings can continue to pretend that nothing is going on—surely a form of social pathology—or we can do something about it. Which brings us to the book under review.

Journalist Leslie Kean's *UFOs: Generals, Pilots, and Government Officials Go on the Record* is not exactly an updating of J. Allen Hynek's *The UFO Evidence: A Scientific Inquiry* (1972). Hynek's enduring classic surveyed the phenomenon in all its aspects, including what up to then had been called merely "occupant reports" but ever after have been known as close encounters of the third kind. In Kean's book CE3s and other high-strangeness phenomena are absent, and properly so. However intriguing, they comprise soft evidence. Moreover, it is even arguable that some of these alleged experiences, especially on the most extreme end, are only dubiously linked to the harder-evidence cases and may be related to the larger phenomenon by no more than superficial appearance, though at this point that can be no more than speculative reading. Roswell is mentioned only in a passing paragraph in Chapter 23 ("The Government Cover-up: Policy or Myth?"), about which more presently.

Kean's book is a direct outgrowth of a November 2007 news conference she and filmmaker James Fox organized in Washington, D.C. The two assembled an international group of retired military officers, government officials, and aviation experts to attest to their sightings or investigations. Some chapters are written by these individuals, including several who actually headed their governments' official UFO projects and who cautiously have concluded that the ETH best provides a framework in which their strongest data make sense. The judgment of Jean-Jacques Velasco, longtime head of France's government-sponsored GEIPAN (formerly GEPAN), is typical:

> [UFOs] seem to be artificial and controlled objects whose physical characteristics can be measured by our detection systems, radar in particular. They fall under a physics which is by far superior and more evolved than the one

> we have in our most technologically advanced countries. . . . When military aircrafts are directly involved, these objects are able to anticipate and neutralize the maneuvers of the pilots assigned to security and defense missions, and some remarkable cases show the capacity of the UFOs to seemingly understand a particular situation or to anticipate intentions of escape or military neutralization. . . . If they are artificial probes they cannot be of terrestrial origin and consequently they must come from somewhere else."

The cases highlighted here are nearly all from the mid-1970s to the present. Some are well-known to ufologists: the Iranian dogfight, the Rendlesham CE2, the JAL radar/visual, the Tucson lights, and others. Many are related in accounts written by witnesses or other participants—united, by the way, in acerbic dismissal of efforts to "explain" their experiences in what purport to be prosaic terms. Being novices to these sorts of things prior to their own unanticipated observations, the witnesses express shock at the arrogance and outright bone-headedness of debunkers. Though not himself a witness, Federal Aviation Administration official John J. Callahan (who contributes Chapter 22, recalling his inquiry into the January 1987 JAL case soon after its occurrence) manages to tell an appalling story with a great deal of wit. Callahan learned that where sightings are concerned, his superiors at the FAA "will not investigate [a UFO report that presumably would be under their jurisdiction] unless the object can be identified by an airborne pilot, and instead the FAA will offer a host of weak explanations. If the FAA cannot identify the object within FAA terminology, then it doesn't exist. [A] cliché we sometimes used: For every problem there is a solution. The FAA seems to believe that the converse is also true: If there is no solution, there is no problem."

Some of the most fascinating—alarming isn't far off the mark either—encounters involve failed efforts to shoot down UFOs, as in a particularly gripping account provided here by Commandante (Ret.) Óscar Santa María Huertas (Chapter 10) of his interaction with a fast-moving domed disc on April 11, 1980, confirmed by ground witnesses at the Peruvian Air Force base from which he was ordered to intercept the UFO. On initial approach the pilot "shot a burst of sixty-four 30-mm shells, which created a cone-shaped 'wall of fire' that would normally obliterate anything in its path. Some of the projectiles deviated from the target, falling to the ground, and others hit it with precision. . . . But nothing happened. It seemed as if the huge bullets were absorbed by the [UFO], and it wasn't damaged. Then suddenly the object began to ascend very rapidly and head away from the base." And that's only the *beginning* of the incident.

Besides its compelling retelling of extraordinary (and extraordinarily evidential) UFO events, Kean and her collaborators examine related issues that are only rarely, or anyway not very capably, treated in the literature. These include what some photographs may tell us about UFO propulsion and why UFOs sometimes *aren't* detected on radar (usually because of the nature of observation; if operators aren't looking for them, they have to go out of their way to extract them from the background noise).

Toward the end of the book is a remarkably astute essay which anybody interested in the UFO controversy ought to read. Two well-credentialed political scientists, Alexander Wendt (Ohio State University) and Raymond Duvall (head of his department at the University of Minnesota), expose the sources of resistance to UFO evidence, from which a more objective view would discern ET visitation as an entirely reasonable—if so far unproven—reading; yet a rigidly enforced social taboo gives "the UFO this special status…that it is considered to be outside the boundaries of rational discourse." After examining and eviscerating popular skeptical claims, Wendt and Duvall argue, "The inability to see clearly and talk rationally about UFOs seems to be a symptom of authoritative anxiety, a socially subconscious fear of what the reality of the UFO might mean for modern government." They're not arguing for a massive cover-up, but addressing a deep, internalized psychological anxiety which requires that officialdom reject the possibility of UFOs and all they appear to imply.

Kean and other contributors repeatedly raise the issue of the U.S. government's curious indifference to even the most compelling reports, an apathy (as the book richly attests) not shared by officials of other advanced nations, some of which have all but endorsed the existence of the UFO anomaly and found a way to live with it. Always intelligent and perceptive, Kean, not taken with the usual conspiratorial ruminations, deduces from her own interviews and inquiries that an Unacknowledged Special Access Program (USAP) group, used within the Department of Defense to control sensitive information without acknowledging its existence, quietly collects data while keeping even high officials in the dark. One item of evidence she provides is an official document of unquestioned provenance essentially stating as much, and I am not referring to the Bollender memo.

Finally and not least, *UFOs* arrives with quotes from a startling assortment of authority figures who decided this time not to keep their thoughts to themselves, among them world-famous physicist Michio Kaku (on the front cover yet), Rudy Schild (Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics), and Neal Lane (Rice University, former director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy). Former White House chief of staff and current president of the Center for American Progress John Podesta has publicly expressed interest in the UFO question before, but it's still good to see his foreword.

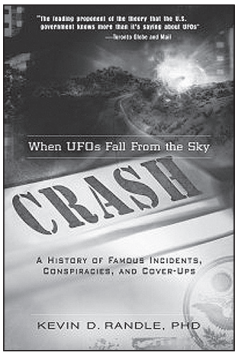
For reasons this book details, resistance to the UFO phenomenon, especially in the United States, remains more entrenched than ever, so much so that sober consideration may not be possible for another generation or two. Meantime, we may predict that hostile reviewers who will not bother to address its evidence and arguments will savage *UFOs* in

order to keep the taboo well in place. We may be confident, too, that Kaku, Schild, and the rest will be nowhere mentioned as poison pens fly across pages. The book is sure to influence, however, the thinking of educated persons who are genuinely curious and open-minded. *UFOs* rises above the usual morass of muddled thinking on both sides and ascends to clear skies, where puzzling anomalies persist and await their time.—*Jerome Clark.*

Crash: When UFOs Fall From the Sky, by Kevin D. Randle. Franklin Lakes, N.J.: New Page Books, 2010. ISBN 978-1-60163-100-8. 320p.

Over the decades since the epochal Kenneth Arnold sighting, ufology has collected a vast amount of data that eventually grew in complexity sufficient to demand parsing into subsets. During an internet search, I found the following list of subcategories of ufology, each with at least one principal coordinator and an associated archive:

- Electromagnetic effects
- Vehicle interference cases
- Physical trace cases
- Physiological effects
- Radar cases
- Pilot sightings
- Astronaut sightings
- UFO landings
- Human-initiated contact
- Humanoid sightings
- Black triangles
- Water-related sightings



For example, one researcher, Ted Phillips, took up what he calls physical trace cases and has published a catalog of over 4,000 instances. Extensive vehicle interference case studies have been published by Mark Rodeghier and Keith Basterfield, among others. Carl Feindt has collected 1,165 water-related sightings ranging from 1067 A.D. to 2009.

A relatively recent subcategory of ufology is abductions, which originated with a handful of researchers, some of whom questioned whether the topic properly belonged to ufology. (Budd Hopkins's *Missing Time,* the seminal abduction book, was published in 1982.) It has blossomed into a publishing industry, and if you own a television set or visit the movie theaters, you have been inundated with the dramatic details of alien abductions. Today when members of the lay public mention UFOs, they often mean abductions.

Oddly, UFO crashes appear very far down the comprehensive list of ufological subcategories. Even then, one can find lists of crashes, but apparently there exists no organized study of the topic. The late Leonard Stringfield (1920–1994) compiled a series of crash/retrieval reports, though in the main he simply collected these stories, not having the wherewithal to investigate them.

A French website, www.ufologie.net, lists 145 alleged crashes. Another site, www.ufoevidence.org/documents/doc1683.htm, shows only 34 cases and adds the caveat, "The following is a preliminary list of UFO crashes throughout the world. Currently, little is known about most of these crashes." Steven Greer's Center for the Study of Extraterrestrial Intelligence (CSETI) has a list of no less than 272 purported UFO crashes, also with little supporting data.

Why have alleged UFO crashes, as a genre, suffered this relative neglect? It may be that lurking in the unconscious of ufology is the traumatic memory of the 1950 Frank Scully book *Behind the Flying Saucers,* the fiasco that introduced us to crash hoaxes and which still resonates. Or, as in the instance of Roswell, those few cases with much evidence and opportunity for investigation have formed their own fiefdoms, shoving aside all potential competitors.

Kevin Randle has resurrected the issue and essayed an overview in *Crash: When UFOs Fall From the Sky,* an update to his *History of UFO Crashes,* published 15 years ago.

This is much more than a seed catalog of anecdotes drawn from tongue-in-cheek newspaper stories. He analyzes those accounts that contain enough data for the task, drawing on his very considerable experience as a ufologist and military intelligence officer. In most of those instances, Randle adds his opinion, often reaching a skeptical conclusion, but always treating the material with care. The result is that he has raised the topic of UFO crashes in general to one deserving the interest of the serious ufologist, and he has presented it in one efficient book.

Randle does occasionally disappoint, such as these two extremely bare entries which add nothing to the discussion:

> February 18, 1950. Birmingham, Alabama. The military cordoned an area around a crashed flying saucer. A helicopter transported the alien bodies of the flight crew to Maxwell Air Force Base.
>
> Mid-1950s. Copenhagen, Denmark. Farmer Christian Sanderson and his wife claimed to have seen two flying saucers over their farmhouse. One of them stayed airborne, and the other landed nearby. It then disintegrated into thousands of brightly glowing sparks. No evidence was recovered, no more information can be found, and there were no additional witnesses.

Shag Harbour, Kecksburg, and Roswell are treated at length, as one would expect. He concludes in each instance that there is probable cause to believe that these were UFOs that really crashed. I also found that Randle's summaries of important cases contained facts and angles new to me.

Selecting cases for the book wasn't easy. Here is what Randle has to say about the process:

> . . . the reports included on my listing are the ones that I find the most interesting or the ones that have the greatest potential for additional information, or the ones that I'm sure have a valid solution to them. It is clear to me, if not to others, what fell. That ranges from an alien ship to

(continued on page 23)

FORD FILES—*continued from page 16*

Apart from pranks and natural phenomena, some of these objects may well be products of experimentation by our own military. . . . There are over 600 unexplained sightings, many of which have been seen by competent witnesses. Nor do they all claim them to be some supernatural or bizarre occurrences . . . It is for this reason that I continue to support this 'horse radish' as you call it."

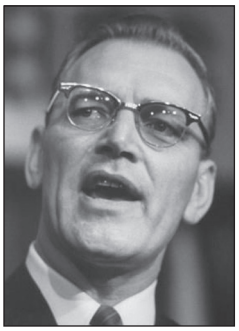
So many sincere and intelligent witnesses had made reports, and so many American citizens were alarmed, that the issue needed to be addressed fully and openly. Throughout the period from March 1966 to January 1969, Ford consistently maintained that a congressional investigation was the best way of achieving the desired public discussion. Also during this time Congressman Ford believed there were many, far more pressing issues than UFOs,[9] particularly after the spate of constituent communications on UFOs mostly subsided after April 1966, though occasional small "blips" of letters would later occur.

And when the Colorado Project report and the National Academy of Sciences review of this report came out in early 1969, Ford was satisfied. Since most average citizens seemed unperturbed by these outcomes, and perhaps also considering that a new Republican administration was coming into office, there was no need to stir up unnecessary public tempests.

House Minority Leader Ford *was* willing to make a little occasional political hay out of Congress' failure to act decisively in the UFO matter. Several times Ford suggested to his correspondents that things might be better were the Republicans' then-current numerical disadvantage rectified in the upcoming 1966 elections. And an early Ford news release compared the Johnson administration's spin on the Consumer Price Index to the Air Force's "tightness" with UFO information.

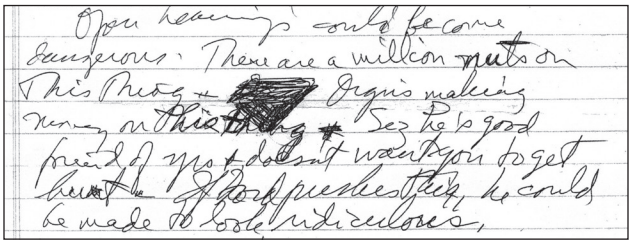
KARTH NOTES

Among Ford Presidential Library documents not contained in the Legislative Files is an article on the secret meetings on UFOs that Rep. Joseph E. Karth (D-Minn.) had held in 1961, and notes taken by a Ford staffer from an interview with Karth which Ford mentioned in one of his news releases.[10] The handwriting is at times hard to decipher, but Karth seemed convinced that many sightings were of natural phenomena, that it was hard to rule out pranks, and that the Air Force could come up with explanations for more than 90% of all reports, with the exception "of [a] few where there was no explan.[ation] whatsoever."



Joseph E. Karth

Karth maintained that there was no evidence that anything reported was extraterrestrial. It appears that there was some discussion between Karth and the Ford staffer of bringing the hearings up to date, with a 10-member group, possibly five from each committee (likely Armed Services and Science and Astronautics), on the basis that public hearings and sound explanations would help dispel peoples' fears, and that there was no reason for secrecy, even if some of the UFOs were military experiments. This suggestion and its rationale likely came from Ford, as relayed through his staff member to Karth, because the notes following these points sound "Karthian," continuing with: "Open hearings could become dangerous. There are a million nuts on this thing & org[anizations] making money on this thing. Sez he's good friend of y[ou]rs & doesn't want you to get burnt. If Ford pushes this, he could be made to look ridiculous."[11]



Notes from an interview with Rep. Joseph Karth, in the Gerald R. Ford Library collection.

FORD'S CALL

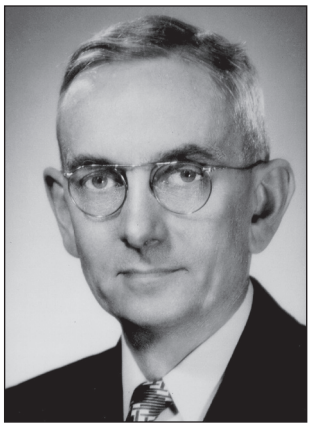
For several years, officials in Project Blue Book had labored unsuccessfully to get their own project terminated or farmed out to some other group, at first military. Congressman Ford's call for and L. Mendel Rivers' holding of public hearings afforded the Air Force the opportunity to carry this extrication out in a way that appeared uninstigated.

At the April 5, 1966, hearings of the House Committee on Armed Services, Air Force Secretary Harold Brown mentioned that he was considering the recommendations of a special panel, the "USAF Scientific Advisory Board Ad Hoc Committee to Review Project 'Blue Book'," which had met on February 3, 1966. The Air Force had itself requested this review in September 1965.

Harold Brown

The O'Brien Committee, so-called because of its Chairman Dr. Brian O'Brien, recommended that a university or not-for-profit organization be selected to coordinate the work of a few selected universities, geographically distributed across the country, which would "provide scientific teams to investigate promptly and in depth certain selected sightings of UFO's."[12] Perhaps 100 sightings annually could be thus treated, with the results of strengthening the scientific treatment of UFO cases, increasing the opportunity to learn something of value, and to support the good work that the understaffed Project Blue Book team had already accom-

plished. There was also language to the effect that such information "would almost certainly provide a far better basis than we have today for decision on a long-term UFO program." While Brown told the congressmen on April 5 that he was thinking the committee's recommendations over, Dr. J. Allen Hynek did something he characterized as "a little daring," and strongly endorsed an outside civilian study, something he as Air Force consultant had already twice suggested, and as early as 1953. (Hynek's suggestion ultimately led to the formation of the Center for UFO Studies in 1973.)



Brian O'Brien

Several Armed Service Committee members seemed enthusiastic towards the O'Brien and Hynek recommendations and assumed that Secretary Brown was going to go ahead with them. Whatever his attitude toward Hynek's outburst, his own prior leanings, or indeed whether he immediately perceived an opportunity to rid the Air Force once and for all of the albatross its public UFO project had been, that very afternoon Air Force Secretary Brown set in motion the chain of events that would ultimately lead to the Colorado Project and the fulfillment of the Air Force's wishes. Given the historical movement within the Air Force towards this end, it is probable that the goal would have been reached without Ford's action, but the process would have proceeded somewhat differently.

In sum, Congressman Gerald Ford's correspondence and actions show no special interest toward UFOs or "friendliness" to the UFO-openness cause per se, but rather the standard concerns that the plain-spoken Michigander consistently held throughout his political career about the American people and telling them the truth, where it was safe and helpful to do so. I do not see any necessary influence upon Congressman Ford's UFO-related actions from his experience on the Warren Commission, nor do I find that the swamp gas aftermath helped shape Gerald Ford's later role vis-à-vis Watergate and his subsequent pardoning of a disgraced ex-president. Lastly, the chain of events that Ford helped initiate turned out to be quite helpful but not crucial to the Air Force effort to deliver itself from its public UFO mess.

Acknowledgment

The author would like to thank the staff of the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library for their assistance, advice, and many courtesies extended during his research.

Notes

1. In an April 1966 chronological entry, Ford scholar George Lankevich states: "Ford attacks 'Johnson inflation' and mismanagement of the Vietnam war. He also demands a congressional investigation of UFOs, a request mercifully buried." George Lankevich, *Gerald R. Ford, 1913– : Chronology, Documents, Bibliographical Aids* (Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.: Oceana, 1977), p. 5.

2. Robert Sheaffer, *UFO Sightings: The Evidence* (Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1998), p. 30.

3. Ford Congressional Papers: Legislative files boxes B48, folders 21–48; B49, folders 1–5; Box B79, folders 43–48; Box 131, folders 24–29; and 156, folders 21–24, house the UFO issue-related correspondence. References to specific letters have been kept to a minimum to reduce the number and extent of endnotes to this article.

4. An internal memo attached to several caustic letters from March 28, 1966, says: "These letters are highly critical of Mr. Ford's proposed investigation of UFO's and in writing them we might only reinforce that hostility."

5. A very rough tally of letters through April 9 shows about 245 positive, 10 negative, and 5 neutral (did not express either way) communications; from April 10–30, there were 76 positive, no negative, and 3 neutral letters.

6. Ford's return letter of May 23 made clear that "While I appreciate having the information on this sighting, my main concern has been that a Congressional investigation be held, all the facts examined on the unexplained sightings, and that the report be made fully available to the public."

7. Form letter, n.d., Box B48-42.

8. Ford states in a July 14, 1966, letter: "I must admit that I did not have a deep interest in the subject until the sightings occurred in Michigan and it became apparent that several Michigan people are very concerned about this matter as well as many others across the country."

9. As mentioned in an April 20, 1966, reply. A gauge of where the UFO question lay in Ford's mind might be furnished by the following comment from an April 12 Ford letter: "If the Federal government could spend large sums to research the affectional ties between mother and baby monkeys, they can certainly afford to look into a matter which has some people very disturbed and concerned." Note Ford's reiteration of peoples' concerned reaction to the matter as motivation for his actions.

10. Karth held two days of "hush-hush hearings" in his congressional office in 1961 for Rep. Overton Brooks's (D-La.) Science and Astronautics Committee, making an oral report to the full committee, but nothing was publicly released. Ford used this prior set of hearings as leverage in an April 3 news release to put pressure on the current committee chair to update things and support a UFO "probe."

11. See opinions in Ford news releases; Karth's remarks in an April 3, 1966, *Detroit News* article by J. F. Ter Horst; and a blistering letter from Karth to Maj. Donald E. Keyhoe on August 28, 1961, www.footnote.com/image/#12428413.

12. U.S. House Committee on Armed Services. *Unidentified Flying Objects.* Hearings, 89th Cong., 2d Sess., April 5, 1966, p. 5995. ✦

CANADIAN SPHERES—*continued from page 9*

statute miles on his port side. It was only pure luck that his father-in-law had spotted the thing at all through the "v." I gleaned as much information as I could from the pilot on the phone and through emails and then met him during a fly-in about six months later. Again he would not fill out a report. [Note: The pilot is known to me as determined during our contact both before I knew of the event and after.]

I learned the only real effect resulting from this encounter was on the pilot himself. As much as he did not want to know what the "thing" was, still he banked gently in its direction. As soon as he did this, the UAP almost instantaneously darted from its position to a position estimated to be over Springhill, Nova Scotia, about 20 statute miles away. It hovered there as a bright dot. The pilot's track would have taken him closer to Springhill but a bit south of it. However, at some point the object just disappeared.

As for the effect on the pilot, he said that he felt dread. I asked him to explain what he meant. "I got a sick feeling when I saw the thing. I knew right then that this was not natural or man-made," he said. He told me that he thought he was being observed and that in the space of a few seconds that his whole belief system was impacted. One of the worst situations a police officer can roll on is a violent domestic dispute. "The feeling I had that day was worse than going into one of those situations." He radioed Halifax Tower about 40 miles away and was told they were receiving his transponder code of 1200 but there was nothing else in his locale.

As noted, the pilot in this case was distressed at what he had seen. He, like the other pilots, never forgot the incident. Not only did the sighting disturb him but it had another effect on him as well. He was so affected by the incident that he was distracted to some degree during the rest of the flight. He was constantly rolling the encounter over and over in his mind. Being distracted while flying an airplane is definitely a negative influence on a pilot's ability to counteract any situation that may arise to threaten the passenger's safety and control the aircraft.

COMMENTS AND CONCLUSION

Is there such a thing as ball lightning that is as large as that described by the pilot of the DC-3 in Case 1? My research indicates that the ball lightning phenomenon is a gray area similar to the UAP phenomenon. In any event, the material I have had access to indicates that, in nature at least, these BL phenomena are small and on the order of 6–10 inches in diameter, not 11 feet or more in size. What connection would this large ball have to the curious, monstrous black cloud that so quickly vanished once the event had occurred?

Although ball lightning is part of the popular lexicon, there has been very little research that supports any natural phenomenon that might account for huge balls of lightning or, as is more likely, plasma events.

Fig. 5. Long line is the Cherokee's flight track. Double slash = Cherokee. Double line = UAP's track to over Springhill. Arrowheads indicate direction of flight.

Laboratory researchers have generated small, electrically charged balls of light, but nothing that would account for what happened to the pilots of the Dakota on May 13, 1958. Few reports have been generated by pilots it seems, though the present collection of papers may improve those numbers.

Almost two years before the Dakota event, on August 27, 1956, RCAF pilot Capt. R. J. Childerhose, flying an F-86 Canadair Sabre (one of a formation of four F-86s) photographed a brilliant object from his cockpit (Fig. 6). Childerhose was at 36,000 feet (10,980 meters) altitude. His aircraft was over Fort Macleod, Alberta; the object was at his 11 o'clock position and below him, putting this brilliant UAP between himself and the ground.

Childerhose described the object as like a bright, horizontal, silver dollar. It was in

Fig. 6. Photograph of an unidentified high-altitude bright light source. Picture taken by RCAF pilot R. J. Childerhose on August 27, 1956, from an altitude of 36,000 feet.

a clear space between cumulonimbus clouds. Many years later, Bruce Maccabee analyzed the Kodachrome slide and determined that the object in the photograph was emitting light at a level of some 30,000 megawatts, assuming an apparent equal luminosity over its entire surface. Fort Macleod is approximately 75 miles (125 kilometers) south-southwest of Turner Valley where the Dakota event took place. Could some natural phenomenon be generating huge electrical potential in the clouds just east of the Canadian Rocky Mountains?

Silver spheres are not common in UAP reports. In the case of the pilot/police officer who reported to me personally his encounter with such an object, I found it interesting that he had a physical response (probably triggered by some psychological factor) that resulted in his feeling queasy and experiencing dread. The chromelike, 60-foot (18-meter) diameter object was below the horizon and reflecting ground features and when he banked left slightly to approach it, it traveled 20 nautical miles in the space of several seconds. I can conclude little as to what this object might have been other than that there is no such aircraft that can match it in appearance and speed. The pilot in this case most likely suffered a paradigm shift where the object's appearance caused a psychological rather than a physiological effect by its presence. Though UAP with chromelike surfaces are not unheard of, they do not represent a large percentage of all UAP.

In both the Dakota ball lightning case and the chrome ball encounter there is a safety issue at hand that needs to be fully explored in other UAP encounters. Since these two occurrences seem to be exceptional in their (low) frequency, it is difficult to pursue a scientific investigation of their sources. As each incident impinges on aviation safety, they need to be taken very seriously. Science in these two cases has yet to catch up.

References

Haines, Richard F. "Analysis of a UFO Photograph," in Peter A. Sturrock, *The UFO Enigma* (New York: Warner Books, 1999).

Maccabee, Bruce. "Optical Power Output of an Unidentified High Altitude Light Source," *Journal of Scientific Exploration* 13, no. 2 (1999): 199–211, online at www.scientificexploration.org/journal/jse_13_2_maccabee.pdf. ✦

Book reviews—*continued from page 19*

> an extraterrestrial bit of metal called a meteorite. Many times the debris is of foreign manufacture, but not of alien creation.
>
> In the end, I had to limit the listing and the selection method was purely subjective. If I had additional information, if I could add something important, if I could make a case one way or the other, then I tried to incorporate it here. If there was little information about it, or I had nothing to say about it, then it might not have made the cut.

In a surprising number of the 118 cases presented in this book, Randle manages to do what he set out to accomplish, by "making a case one way or the other" and by "adding something important" to the record.

The cases are presented chronologically. Index and bibliography are included, though unfortunately the cited literature is not keyed to the cases. If you are interested at all in alleged UFO crashes, you will want to read this book.—*Robert J. Durant.* ✦

Letter

Art, Life, and UFOs

To the editor:

I very much appreciate Kevin Randle's review in *IUR* 33, no. 1, of my memoir, *Art, Life, and UFOs,* and when he says, "Those familiar with the UFO community know that Budd and I disagree on some major points," he is not only telling the truth but demonstrating to the reader that he has warmly extended himself to be fair and objective in his treatment of my book.

However, I would like to point out two consecutive statements in his piece that may leave erronenous impressions. He writes, "I also wonder if his listening to the famous 1938 Orson Welles *War of the Worlds* radio broadcast, to which he devoted a short chapter, might have also influenced him." Randle's remark suggests that the program might have encouraged my later interest in UFOs, when, in fact, I spent two pages in my book describing the broadcast's powerfully negative effect on me. I wrote,

> I was only a child at the time, but when the program

> was over, I saw it as a devilish stunt that had deeply upset my parents and me. . . . In 1947 I was not alone in my view that the hundreds of UFO accounts covered by the media, and the many reports that were officially made to to the Air Force, were nothing more than clever, deceptive pranks like *The War of the Worlds*. . . . Doctor Orson Welles had inoculated me against the disease of taking UFO reports seriously.

In other words, the broadcast did influence me, by causing me to reject UFO reports as frauds, an opinion I held until I actually saw one for myself in 1964. This is an important point, since tens of thousands of other listeners to the Welles broadcast were undoubtedly affected in just the same negative way when UFO sightings became widespread in the late 1940s.

Next, Randle writes: "A decade later, Hopkins learned of another UFO sighting, this one in North Hudson Park, New Jersey. He knew the witness and interviewed him. . . . he eventually met Ted Bloecher, a long time UFO investigator who became interested when Hopkins told him about the sighting." This so-called "sighting" in New Jersey was actually a dramatic landing case with occupants and ground traces, a combination CE1, CE2, and CE3, to use Allen Hynek's categories. Other witnesses supported the initial man's account of the UFO landing, which took place at a location only one mile from Broadway in Manhattan. As I discussed in my memoir, this case has extraordinary importance for me because it was the the event that catapulted me into UFO research. And as the subject of my first published article on UFOs—a piece that appeared in a popular New York newspaper—the North Hudson Park case also provided the research community with yet another fleeting round of national interest and attention.

So, far from being merely a "sighting," as Randle's word suggests, this UFO landing-occupant case has not only deep personal meaning for me but is regarded in the field as a well-investigated, major incident. Taken together, his accounts of the effect of the Orson Welles program on me and the North Hudson Park "sighting" can easily leave the reader with inaccurate impressions when compared with what I actually wrote. I thank you for the opportunity to clarify those important points for your readers.

And again I want to thank Kevin Randle for his generous review of my memoir.

Budd Hopkins
New York City
✦

Another hole in the cloud

by Mark Rodeghier

On November 7, 2006, an oval-shaped, metallic-looking UFO was seen directly over Chicago's O'Hare International Airport by several airline and airport personnel, including aircraft pilots. The UFO hovered in place for several minutes, and then ascended vertically through a low overcast. As it did so, it left an open hole in the clouds that persisted for a few minutes (see "A UAP and its Safety Implications: O'Hare International Airport, Nov. 7, 2006" in *IUR,* Vol. 31, No. 3).

Cases where UFOs have an effect on clouds are rare, but not unprecedented. As proof, a similar observation was reported to the British Ministry of Defence (MoD) in 1989. The case report, sketchy as it is, was released this past year as part of the general and ongoing release of UFO files by the MoD (see www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ufos/ for details and access to the files for a small fee).

The sighting occurred on August 22, 1989, also during the day, at 2:40 p.m. Although the exact location is blacked out, because it was at the witness's home, enough information remains to locate it at or near Sunderland, in the northeast of England. The UFO was described as a "circular flashing light," which must have been fairly bright to be seen in daylight.

As with the O'Hare sighting, the UFO was in view for about five minutes, ample time to examine it and compare it with known objects. And in another parallel to O'Hare,

This photo of a "fallstreak hole" was taken near Omarama, New Zealand, in May 2006. These holes are caused when some supercooled water droplets at a high altitude freeze and fall suddenly, setting off a domino effect that spreads into a circle.

the UFO was at first stationary. The weather was good, clear with some scattered cloud.

According to the witness, the UFO then "moved rapidly vertically leaving hole in cloud which glowed red." Although the hole didn't glow red in the O'Hare sighting, the UFO also rose vertically there.

Unfortunately, as is typical of almost every case reported to the MoD, no investigation or follow-up was done, so no more details than this are available. But these two similar reports are intriguing, and illustrate how UFO behavior and effects usually are repeated in at least a few events. Further, leaving a hole in the cloud underscores the physical nature of the phenomenon, whatever its ultimate cause. ✦